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**“The Holy Spirit as Bond” in Calvin’s Thought:
Its functions in connection with the *extra Calvinisticum***

Ph. D. Dissertation

by

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Abbreviations

<i>CCNT</i>	<i>Calvin's New Testament Commentaries</i> . 12 vols. Ed. D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959-1972.
<i>CO</i>	<i>Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia</i> . Ed. W. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss. 59 vols. Corpus Reformationum, vols. 29-87. Brunswick: C. A. Schwetschke and Son (M. Bruhn), 1863-1900.
<i>COR</i>	<i>Ioannis Calvini opera omnia denuo recognita et adnotatione critica instructa notisque illustrata</i> . 7 Series. Ed. B. G. Armstrong, C. Augustijn, I. Backus, O. Fatio, H. Feld, F. M. Higman, W. H. Neuser, B. Roussel, W. van't Spijker, D. F. Wright. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1992-.
<i>Inst.</i> (1536)	<i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> (1536 Edition). Trans. F. L. Battles. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986.
<i>Inst.</i> (1559)	<i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> (1559 Edition). Ed. J. T. McNeill. Trans. F. L. Battles. 2 vols. Library of Christian Classics, vol. XX and XXI. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977.
<i>LCC XXII</i>	<i>Theological Treatises</i> . Trans. J. K. S. Reid. Library of Christian Classics, vol. XXII. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954.
<i>T&T</i>	<i>Tracts and Treatises</i> . 3 vols. Trans. H. Beveridge. Edinburgh, 1844-1851; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958.

Chapter 1

Introduction

- I. New quest for Calvin's central dogma: *Communio cum Christo* and its pneumatological nature

Calvin scholars were once enthusiastic over tracing the central dogma of Calvin's theology. Their purpose was to ascertain the very foundation of Calvin's theology, so that the manifold themes of his theology could be understood as derived from this organising and controlling centre. The doctrine of predestination was the most extensively discussed possibility.¹ However, the academic climate decidedly changed in the twentieth century. Nowadays, it is generally agreed that there is no such central dogma in Calvin's thought. The image of Calvin also changed accordingly. Instead of being a systematician who was concerned primarily with the logical consistency of a system, Calvin is now portrayed as a biblical theologian who held in tension seemingly incompatible truths from the multifaceted Scriptural data, as well as a pragmatic polemicist of the evangelical faith who was attending to the turbulent problems facing the then struggling churches all over Europe.²

Nevertheless, the drive behind the aforesaid pursuit has never died down. Calvin's thought manages to confront us with some distinctive characteristics, so that some themes, if not a single theme, can really illumine his entire theology. After analysing the

¹ The classic work in this respect is A. Schweizer, *Die protestantischen Centraldogmen in ihrer Entwicklung innerhalb der reformirten Kirche*, 2 vols. (Zürich: Orell, Füssli und Comp., 1854, 1856).

² See W. J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); and B. Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

current trend in Calvin research, Gamble expresses this new sentiment with the analogy of key:

As a matter of fact, most leading scholars today maintain that there is no one single key to unlock the door of Calvin's theology. There is a consensus that there is more than one centrally important theme or, to continue the key analogy, that some keys open more doors than others.³

Within these possible keys, one of them is the union or communion with Christ. As early as in 1935, Brunner already mentioned that Calvin's various teachings such as his ethics, doctrine of election, sacraments, church and even sanctification can only be understood in the light of *insertio* or *insitio in Christum*.⁴ Brunner's suggestion makes a lasting resonance. In 1964, while discussing Calvin's pneumatology, Quistorp affirmed Brunner's comment:

Fast alle neueren Calvin-Forscher sind sich darin einig, daß es bei der *communio cum Christo* oder der *insitio in Christum* um eine zentrale Lehre Calvins geht, die ihr Licht nach allen Seiten seiner Theologie hin ausstrahlt, auch hinsichtlich seiner Pneumatologie. ... Doch ist allerdings seine Darstellung des ganzen Christseins als Christusgemeinschaft der Gläubigen undenkbar ohne die stete, dem biblischen Christuszeugnis entsprechenden Beziehung zur Lehre vom Heiligen Geist.⁵

In 1986, Partee argued from a theological point of view that the doctrine of union with Christ is preferable to that of twofold knowledge of God as the central dogma of

³ R. C. Gamble, "Current Trends in Calvin Research, 1982-90," in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, ed. W. H. Neuser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 106.

⁴ E. Brunner, *Vom Werk des Heiligen Geistes* (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1935) 33.

⁵ H. J. J. Th. Quistorp, "Calvins Lehre vom Heiligen Geist," in *De Spiritu Sancto: Bijdragen tot de leer van de Heilige Geest bij gelegenheid van het 2e eeuwheest van het Stipendium Bernardinum*, H. W. Obbink, A. A. van Ruler, W. C. van Unnik (eds) (Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon N. V., 1964) 133.

Calvin's theology.⁶ In the next year, at a conference about Calvin's pneumatology the Dutch scholar Spijker also paid his commendation to this doctrine:

Indeed, as I observed already, we can call the communion with Christ the heart of Calvin's theology ... To Bucer, regeneration is the result of the insertio, insitio, incorporatio, inhabitatio of ours into Christ and of Christ into us ... And this communion with Christ, which is pneumatological in nature, is the fountain of the vera pietas, living in the timor Dei... And what holds for Bucer can also be said of Calvin ... Outside of Christ, and without him dwelling in us, it is impossible to speak about even one article of faith. It is a universal point of view in Calvin's thinking.⁷

While emphasising the central importance of the theme "communion with Christ", these earlier works brought to light another distinctive characteristic of Calvin's thought, namely, the intricate connection between his christology and his pneumatology. In his monumental work on Calvin's pneumatology, Krusche also came to the same observation:

Wird man sagen müssen, daß Calvins Christologie stark pneumatologisch akzentuiert ist, so muß man andererseits auch sagen, daß seine Lehre vom Geist eine starke christologische Akzentuierung erhält.⁸

Out of the numerous insights imported by Krusche's work, his reappraisal of the christological doctrine of the *extra Calvinisticum* proved to be particularly influential. According to Krusche, this doctrine should not be regarded as a corollary derived from

⁶ C. Partee, "Calvin's Central Dogma Again," in *Calvin Studies III: Colloquium on Calvin Studies at Davidson College and Davidson College Presbyterian Church*, J. H. Leith (ed.) (Davidson, North Carolina: Davidson College and Davidson College Presbyterian Church, 1986) 39-46.

⁷ W. van't Spijker, "'Extra Nos' and 'in Nobis' by Calvin in a Pneumatological Light," in *Sixth Colloquium on Calvin & Calvin Studies*, P. De Klerk (ed.) (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 1989) 44.

⁸ W. Krusche, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957) 151. Also, "Diese Unterschiedenheit beruht u.E. in der Grundbeziehung zwischen der Lehre vom Wirken des Heiligen Geistes und der Christologie." *ibid.* 14.

the philosophical principle “finitum non capax infiniti”. Rather, it is actually demanded by Calvin’s pneumatology.⁹ He suggested that there is an inner connection between the *extra Calvinisticum* and Calvin’s understanding of the *Filioque*. Krusche’s brief reappraisal of the doctrine of the *extra Calvinisticum* was followed by a more thorough study contributed by Willis. Preoccupied with its functions in Calvin’s christology, knowledge of God and ethics, Willis unfortunately did not spare pages to examine Krusche’s hypothesis, but simply left another equally pregnant statement:

Part of the force of the “extra-Calvinisticum” in Calvin’s thought is that it makes pneumatology integral to christology and so affords a christology more properly trinitarian than would otherwise be the case.¹⁰

Our present study is basically an investigation on this connection between Calvin’s pneumatology and his christology. Or to put it more concretely, our subject matter is the functions of an important theme in Calvin’s thought, namely, “the Holy Spirit as bond”. We will see how Calvin developed and applied this pneumatological notion alongside his christological decision of the *extra Calvinisticum*. Seeing that this notion of *vinculum Spiritus*, together with *communio cum Christo*, forms the crowning conception of Book Three of the definitive edition of the *Institutes*, we hope that our study can shed some light on the theological intention behind this proposed “central dogma” of Calvin’s theology.

⁹ *ibid.* 128. His revision of the traditional view is readily adopted by many Calvin scholars. See E. D. Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966); H. A. Oberman, “The ‘Extra’ Dimension in the Theology of Calvin,” *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*, vol. 8, *An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*, R. C. Gamble (ed.) (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1992) 160-184; C. Link, “Die Entscheidung der Christologie Calvins und ihre theologische Bedeutung: Das sogenannte Extra-Calvinisticum,” *Evangelische Theologie*, 47 (1987) 97-119.

¹⁰ E. D. Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966) 83.

II. The *extra Calvinisticum* in the *Institutes*

The term *extra Calvinisticum* was originally a polemical term, which was first coined by Lutheran theologians in the seventeenth century to label the distinctive teaching of their Reformed opponents in the great Lord's Supper controversy.¹¹ Although the functions of this doctrine, as Willis demonstrated with admirable clarity, permeate to different areas of Calvin's thought, it is widely accepted that there are two classic texts of the *extra Calvinisticum* in the 1559 *Institutes*, which express the notion most clearly of all. One is found in a section regarding christology (II, 13, 4), while the other in a section regarding the Lord's Supper (IV, 17, 30). They read as follows:

For even if the Word in his immeasurable essence united with the nature of man into one person, we do not imagine that he was confined therein. Here is something marvelous: the Son of God descended from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, he willed to be borne in the virgin's womb, to go about the earth, and to hang upon the cross; yet he continuously filled the world even as he had done from the beginning!¹²

In this manner, he [Christ] is said to have descended to that place according to his divinity, not because divinity left heaven to hide itself in the prison house of the body, but because even though it filled all things, still in Christ's very humanity it dwelt bodily (Col. 2:9), that is, by nature, and in a certain ineffable way.¹³

Both texts were produced in a polemical context and related to the nature of Christ's humanity. With the text in II, 13, 4, Calvin was refuting a notion of celestial flesh of Christ, which was taught by Menno Simons. With the text in IV, 17, 30, he was refuting

¹¹ For the history of the term, see Willis 8-25.

¹² *Inst.* (1559) II, 13, 4 (*CO* 2:352).

¹³ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 17, 30 (*CO* 2:1032).

a notion of ubiquity of Christ's flesh, which was later identified with the teaching of his Lutheran critics. Historically speaking, the second text is earlier than the first one. It first appeared in the 1536 *Institutes*. This fact raises our attention to two important things. First, Link is certainly right when he calls the Lord's Supper the "Sitz im Leben" of the *extra Calvinisticum*.¹⁴ Therefore, if we try to examine Calvin's theological intention and impetus behind this notion, we have to seek it in the context of his eucharistic teaching. Secondly, Calvin had finished the 1536 edition of the *Institutes*, before he was known publicly and invited to be the reformer and minister in Geneva. It means that he was then not involved in any contention among different camps of the Reformation and thus was quite free from any politico-ecclesiastical constraint. Therefore, the position of the *extra Calvinisticum* in this 1536 edition can fairly mark the starting point of his reflection, from which we can see how his thought developed subsequently.

In the overall plan of our study we will attempt in chapter 2 to trace the theological intention behind the first text of the *extra Calvinisticum* and see how Calvin subsequently invoked the notion "the Holy Spirit as bond" to enhance his teaching. A short exposition of the functions of the notion in the eucharistic context will also be given as an outline of the following chapters. In chapters 3, 4 and 5, we will examine the relation between the Holy Spirit and the person and work of Christ. First, we will examine Calvin's understanding of Christ's and the Spirit's aseity, as well as his concept of person in the trinitarian context. This will help us to clarify the relation between the *extra*

¹⁴ Link 105.

Calvinisticum and *Filioque* (chapter 3). Next, we will explore Calvin's concept of person in the christological context and its relation with the *extra Calvinisticum*. We will see how Calvin transposed the conventional problem of two natures to a problem of offices of the Mediator (chapter 4). This will prepare us to discuss further how a corresponding offices-pneumatology was invoked to accomplish these offices of the Mediator in acquiring righteousness and life for us (chapter 5). In chapter 6, we will see how believers receive the salvific benefits accomplished in this redeeming work through the *communio Christi vinculo Spiritus*. We will trace how the notion *communio Christi* was invoked to safeguard the unity and differentiation of salvific benefits throughout the various editions of the *Institutes* and how it finally emerged with *vinculum Spirit* to form the crowning conception in Book Three of the definitive edition of the *Institutes*. Based on this, we will proceed to examine the works of the Holy Spirit in imparting the salvific benefits. In chapter 7, we will explore how the Holy Spirit unites believers in the present life to the Christ in the future coming. This will also bring us to the termination of the *extra Calvinisticum* in the eschaton.

Chapter 2

Extra Calvinisticum and the Holy Spirit as Bond

In this chapter, we will first examine Calvin's theological intention behind the first *extra Calvinisticum* text. We will then proceed to see how this intention sought its enhancement through incorporating and developing a pneumatological motif, namely "the Holy Spirit as bond". Finally, we will see how Calvin employed this notion to articulate his own solution to the problem of real presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper. This solution outlines how the notion "the Holy Spirit as bond" safeguards the union and distinctiveness of the divinity and the humanity within the person of Christ, as well as the union and distinctiveness of Christ and believers. These two aspects will be further explored in our subsequent chapters. Now let us first turn to the starting point of Calvin's eucharistic teachings.

I. *Extra Calvinisticum* and the Starting Point of Calvin's Eucharistic Teachings

The earliest classic text of the so-called *extra Calvinisticum* first appeared in chapter four of the 1536 *Institutes*, where Calvin offered his first exposition of the Lord's Supper. The text reads:

In this manner, he [Christ] is said to have descended to that place according to his divinity, not because divinity left heaven to hide itself in the prison house of the body, but because even though it filled all things, still in Christ's very

humanity it dwell bodily (Col. 2:9), that is, by nature, and in a certain ineffable way.¹

This text was produced to defend Calvin's position on the problem of real presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper. It intimated a christological decision in Calvin's thought, according to which God the Son, even after He has been clothed in the flesh, remains *also outside (etiam extra)* the flesh, filling and ruling everywhere as before. If we want to ascertain the theological impetus behind this notion, our attention should first be drawn to the eucharistic context from which this text was originated.

Calvin's first exposition of the Lord's Supper was written within the fresh memory of the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. The failure of the Colloquy, as well as the great disturbance to the evangelical front caused by the Lord's Supper controversy, undoubtedly left a deep sorrow in the young Calvin's heart.² In this first edition of *Institutes*, he attempted to offer his own insight on the matter. Being not bound to any ecclesiastical responsibility, he was quite free to express his opinion and managed to show his ability to handle the problem as an independent thinker.³ His effort can be

¹ *Inst.* (1536) 105 (CO 1: 122).

² *Inst.* (1536) 104 (CO 1:120): "these frightful contentions would not have arisen which of old, and even within our memory, have miserably troubled the church", also "As to the contention which has been so keenly debated in our time, an unhappy business, which the devil no doubt stirred up to impede, or rather quite interrupt, the advance of the Gospel, I could wish that the memory of it be quite abolished, so far am I from desiring to relate it at length." *Petit traité de la sainte cène* (1541) (CO 5:457) LCC XXII 163-4.

³ The fact that Calvin by the time of writing the first edition of *Institutes* had no need to work under the shadow of some outstanding predecessors makes it easier for us to recognise his original thinking. Melancthon and Bullinger were not so fortunate in this respect. Some scholars suggest that the real positions of these two men were revealed more clearly from their private correspondences, see T. Wengert, "'We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever': The Epistolary Friendship of John Calvin and Philip Melancthon," in *Melancthon in Europe: His Work and Influence beyond Wittenberg*, ed. K. Maag (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 19-44; P. Rorem, "Calvin and Bullinger on the Lord's Supper: Part 1. The

regarded as an attempt to work out a doctrine of the sacraments according to the basic principles commonly shared by all reformers.

So what is the proper place of the sacraments in general, and of the Lord's Supper in particular within the Christian belief? From the outset, Calvin clearly regarded them as an extension of the proclaimed word and consciously framed the whole issue within the Reformation axioms of *solus Christus* and *sola fide*:

It is therefore certain that the Lord offers us mercy and the grace of his good will both in his Sacred Word and in his sacraments. But it is understood only by those who take Word and sacraments with sure faith, just as Christ was offered and held forth by the Father to all for their salvation, yet not all acknowledged and received him.⁴

Therefore, let it be regarded as a settled principle that the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace. But these avail and profit men nothing unless received by them in faith.⁵

All the blessings and heavenly graces are now exclusively stored up in Christ. God will not allow His glory to be delegated to the earthly things including the sacraments. The sacraments actually share the same office with the proclaimed word in testifying God's grace and promise in Christ, leading us back to this unique source and thus

Impasse," *Lutheran Quarterly* 2 (1988) 155-184; J. N. Tylenda, "The Calvin-Westphal Exchange: The Genesis of Calvin's Treatises Against Westphal," *Calvin Theological Journal* 9 (1974) 182-209.

⁴ *Inst.* (1536) 88 (CO 1:103). For the relationship between proclaimed word and the sacrament, see B. A. Gerrish, "Gospel and Eucharist: John Calvin on the Lord's Supper," chap. in *The Old Protestantism and the New* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982) 106-117; R. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1995) 133-142.

⁵ *Inst.* (1536) 91 (CO 1:107).

nourishing our faith. But then, what is the particularity of the sacraments? Calvin saw it in God's utmost act of accommodation:

Here our merciful Lord so tempers himself to our capacity that (since we are creatures who always creep on the ground, cleave to the flesh, and do not think about or even conceive of anything spiritual) he leads us to himself even by these earthly elements, and in the flesh itself causes us to contemplate the things that are of his Spirit.⁶

For Calvin, the purpose of the Lord's Supper as well as its particular force cannot be properly recognised, unless we become aware of what nature of Christ's salvation is therein to be highlighted through the earthly means:

The promise added thereto very clearly asserts for what purpose it [the Lord's Supper] has been instituted, and the goal to which it looks, namely, to confirm to us that the Lord's body was once for all so given for us [*pro nobis semel traditum*], as now to be ours, and also forever to be so [*ut nunc nostrum sit ac perpetuo etiam futurum*]; that his blood was once for all so poured out for us, as always to be ours [*ut noster sit semper futurus*].⁷

It is not, therefore, the chief function of the Sacrament simply to exhibit to us the body of Christ. Rather, it is, I say, to seal and confirm that promise by which he testifies that his flesh is food indeed and his blood is drink [John 6:56], feeding us unto eternal life [John 6:55], by which he declares himself to be the bread of life, whereof he who eats will live forever [John 6:48, 50]. And to do this, the Sacrament sends us to the cross of Christ [*ad Christi crucem mittere*], where that promise was indeed performed and in all respects fulfilled.⁸

The once-for-all sacrificial death of Christ is the very centre to which the Lord's Supper means to lead us. It does not offer us something new, but simply confirms and testifies what have been granted to us in Christ. Although the proclaimed word testifies

⁶ *Inst.* (1536) 87 (*CO* 1:102).

⁷ *Inst.* (1536) 102 (*CO* 1:118).

⁸ *Inst.* (1536) 103 (*CO* 1:120).

the same promise, the sacrament assures us of the reality of “being for us” and “becoming ours” of Christ’s redemption in the most vivid and familiar manner:

Great indeed is the fruit of sweetness and comfort our souls can gather from this sacrament: because we recognise Christ to have been so engrafted in us as we, in turn, have been engrafted in him, so that whatever is his we are permitted to call ours, whatever is ours to reckon as his [*ut quidquid ipsius est, nostrum vocare, quidquid nostrum est, ipsius censere liceat*]. As a consequence, we may dare assure ourselves that eternal life is ours; that the Kingdom of Heaven can no more be cut off from us than from Christ himself; on the contrary, that we cannot be condemned for our sins any more than can he, because they are not now ours, but his. Not that any guilt is rightly to be imputed to him, but that he has set himself as debtor for them, and presents himself as the payer.⁹

What he [Christ] bids us take is, he points out, ours [*quod accipere iubet, significat nostrum esse*]. What he bids us eat becomes, he points out, one substance with us [*quod manducare iubet, significat unam nobiscum substantiam fieri*]. When he says, “This is my body given for you,” “This is my blood shed for you,” he teaches that these are not so much his as ours, which he took up and laid down, not for his own advantage but for our sake and benefit [*non suo commodo, sed in gratiam ac rem nostram*]. And, indeed, we must carefully observe that the entire force [*totam energiam*] of the Sacrament lies in these words: “which is given for you,” “which is shed for you.” [*quod pro vobis traditur, qui pro vobis effunditur*]¹⁰

It is noteworthy that Calvin did not immediately enter into the centre of dissension in the Lord’s Supper controversy, namely the problem of real presence of Christ’s body. He left over the whole matter, until he properly controlled the sacramental teachings by the salvation of Christ and made sure that the aforesaid “entire force” of the Lord’s Supper was sufficiently taught. In fact, according to his own diagnosis, the Lord’s Supper controversy among the first-generation reformers was indeed a tragic consequence of a

⁹ *Inst.* (1536) 102-3 (*CO* 1:118-9).

¹⁰ *Inst.* (1536) 103 (*CO* 1:119).

methodological mistake. The whole debate went astray at the very outset, as they hastily jumped to that thorny problem:

If this force of the sacrament had been examined and weighed as it deserved, there would have been quite enough to satisfy us, and these frightful contentions would not have arisen which of old, and even within our memory, have miserably troubled the church, when men in their curiosity endeavoured to define how Christ's body is present in the bread. ... This is indeed an important matter, over which great disputes, of words and minds, have arisen. So indeed is it commonly established; but those who feel thus, do not pay attention, in the first place, to the necessity of asking how Christ's body, as it was given for us, became ours [*ut pro nobis traditum est, nostrum fieret*]; how his blood, as it was shed for us, became ours. But that means to possess the whole Christ crucified, and to become a participant in all his benefits [*totum Christum crucifixum possidere, ac omnium eius bonorum participem fieri*].¹¹

The nature of Christ's salvation must condition our investigation of the sacrament and its accompanying problems, not the other way round. Conversely, any interpretation of the Lord's Supper together with its accompanying corollaries cannot be right, if they put the reality, completeness or centrality of Christ's salvation into question. From here, we see how a eucharistic problem was organically integrated with christology and soteriology in Calvin's thought. Based on this principle, Calvin proceeded to the problem of the real presence. First, he directed our attention back to the nature of Christ's salvation. As the life Christ offers us in His salvation is spiritual in nature, so the nourishment of this life, which was represented in the Lord's Supper, should also be spiritual, not corporeal:

First, let us ponder that the sacrament is something spiritual [*spirituale quiddam*], whereby the Lord willed to feed not our bellies but our souls, and let us seek Christ in it, not for our body [*non nostro corpori*], nor so that it can be understood by the senses of our flesh [*sensibus carni nostrae*]; but in such

¹¹ *Inst.* (1536) 104 (CO 1:120-1).

a way that the soul recognises him as present, given and exhibited to itself. In short, we have enough to obtain him spiritually [*spiritualiter*].¹²

Therefore, the problem of presence is only of secondary importance, compared with the problem of nourishment.¹³ Being spiritual in nature, the nourishment of our eternal life should not be confined within the paradigm imposed by the physical or corporeal nourishment. Therefore, whatever mode of presence Christ's body in the sacrament is, believers should be content with the guarantee that its spiritual reality and efficacy is surely there. It seems that Calvin thought that the debate on the local presence (or absence) of Christ's body had been exaggerated out of proportion, for the proper use of the sacrament did not actually hinge on it.

However, a clearer statement on the nature of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper was required to settle the current confusion in the eucharistic teachings. Being consistent with his own principle, Calvin started with the questions as to what sort of body Christ took up in the whole course of salvation and what benefits we have from this body. The answers in these matters should govern their counterpart in the Lord's Supper. Here comes the immediate context of the text of the *extra Calvinisticum*. This classic text itself is a declaration on the conditions of the assuming divinity and the assumed humanity during the earthly ministry, which, according to Calvin, should be normative to those during the

¹² *Inst.* (1536) 104 (*CO* 1:121). We alter Battles' translation of "ut anima velut praesentem sibi datum et exhibitum agnoscat".

¹³ Tylenda also observes that for Calvin the importance of the problem of Christ's presence in the Supper is "a relative importance, that is, relative to the Supper understood as spiritual nourishment". He thought that the latter is the "cornerstone of his eucharistic theology"; J. N. Tylenda, "The Ecumenical Intention of Calvin's Early Eucharistic Teachings," in *Reformatio Perennis*, ed. B. A. Gerrish (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1981) 28-32.

Lord's Supper. Also, in this 1536 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin intimated a soteriological axiom in his exposition on the Apostles' creed, to which he would adhere for the rest of his life:

We confess that he, sent by the Father out of divine kindness and mercy, descended to us to take on our flesh, which he joined to his divinity. Thus it was for our benefit that he who was to become our Mediator was true God and man.¹⁴

According to this axiom, the completeness of both Christ's divinity and His humanity is crucial to our salvation. And the completeness of Christ's humanity is fully in line with the "being for us" structure of Christ's salvation, which is highlighted by the "entire force" of the Lord's Supper:

Therefore, we must hold the following by way of summary. Christ, as he took our true flesh when he was born of the virgin, suffered in our true flesh; when he made satisfaction for us, so also both in rising again he received that same true flesh and bore it up to heaven. For we have this hope of resurrection and of our ascension into heaven: that Christ rose again and ascended. But how weak and fragile that hope would be, if this very flesh of ours had not entered into the Kingdom of Heaven! But it is the unchangingly true nature of a body to be contained in a place, to possess its own dimensions and to have its own shape.¹⁵

Two things are to be noted in this insistence on the true humanity of Christ. First, to be the pledge of our hope, this true humanity should be of the same nature as ours. For Calvin, that means it should have a definite locality and dimensionality, which are the essential properties of the human nature. This insight distanced Calvin from Luther's notion of sacramental union or any other notion of ubiquity of Christ's body. Secondly,

¹⁴ *Inst.* (1536) 50 (*CO* 1:64-5). We will examine this axiom more fully in chapter 4.

¹⁵ *Inst.* (1536) 105 (*CO* 1:121).

Calvin thought that the hope of our own resurrection and ascension is an integral part of the benefits of our salvation. Therefore, the salvific significance of this true humanity is not limited to the earthly ministry, but is perpetual in nature. This insight distanced Calvin from the symbolic memorialism which had long been connected with the name of Zwingli.¹⁶ The perpetuity of this salvific significance should also be reflected in the spiritual nourishment of the Lord's Supper:

Therefore, the sacrament does not make Christ to be the bread of life; but since it reminds us that he was made bread which we continually eat [*quo assidue vescamur*], it gives us a relish and savour of that bread. In short, it assures us that all things that Christ did or suffered were done and suffered to quicken us; and again, that this quickening is eternal, we being ceaselessly [*sine fine*] nourished, sustained and preserved throughout life by it. For, as Christ would not have been the bread of life for us if he had not been born and had not died for us, and if he had not arisen for us, so he would not at all now have been these things if the effective working and fruit of his birth, death, and resurrection were not a thing eternal and immortal [*res aeterna ... ac immortalis*].¹⁷

The sacrament derives its significance by sending us to this perpetual efficacy of Christ's salvation, which was acquired in His true human body and remains vivifying in the same body. Therefore, the sacrament can by no means demand any other nature of the body than that in the redeeming works. This is why Calvin could not tolerate any theory of the real presence which may introduce a notion of docetism by the backdoor. The classic text of the *extra Calvinisticum* is basically a defence along this line. By emphasising that the majesty of Christ's divinity remains unimpaired even after the incarnation, it repudiates a notion of *communicatio idiomatum*, which, in Calvin's mind,

¹⁶ Even at this early stage, Calvin regarded the spiritual nourishment exhibited in the Lord's Supper as God's present act on us, rather than a mere human remembering of a past event.

¹⁷ *Inst.* (1536) 104 (CO 1:120).

may wrongly make Christ's body a phantasm.¹⁸ Calvin was very anxious to preserve the completeness and distinctiveness of Christ's body, which should not be changed in the slightest even after the resurrection. Any suggestion of non-localisation (e.g. ubiquity or immensity) in the glorious, post-resurrection state was resolutely ruled out by reason of its immediate inference to the corresponding non-localisation in the humble, ante-resurrection state.¹⁹

In sum, the christological notion of the *extra Calvinisticum* witnesses to some important theological principles that Calvin upheld in handling the eucharistic problem. These principles were important, because Calvin was wholeheartedly convinced that they were necessary for defending the biblical faith as well as the Reformation insight of his time. We can summarise them as follows: 1. the Lord's Supper does not have grace within itself, but refers and confirms that of Christ's salvation; therefore, the nature and the end of the latter must condition those of the former, not vice versa; 2. the "for us" structure of both Christ's salvation and the Lord's Supper demands that partaking or possessing Christ cannot be divorced from partaking his benefits;²⁰ 3. the gift of Christ's

¹⁸ In our later chapter, we will discuss more fully Calvin's understanding of *communicatio idiomatum* and its relation with the *extra Calvinisticum*.

¹⁹ Calvin was quick in associating the body of Christ shown to the Apostles in the Last Supper with that in the Lord's Supper. If the former cannot be twofold (i.e. both circumscribed and uncircumscribed or both humble and glorified at the same time), the latter cannot be either; *Inst.* (1536) 105-6 (*CO* 1:122). Calvin kept refuting this notion of twofold body in his polemic writings against his Lutheran critics.

²⁰ T. J. Davis argues that the 1536 *Institutes* lacks the distinction between reception of Christ and that of his benefits, which is clearly spelt out in Calvin's mature eucharistic teaching. Accordingly, "substance and presence of body and blood can refer simply to the fruits of Christ's work on the cross and not to the life-giving substance and presence of Christ's flesh." He further comments that "a clear-cut answer to the question, 'What does one receive in the Eucharist?' is not found in Calvin's 1536 work. This is especially the case since Calvin has not developed at this point a way to put the Christian in communion with Christ's life-giving flesh, that is, a concept of the Holy Spirit's work in the *sursum corda* concept." Davis, *The*

salvation is spiritual, so the nourishment of Christ's body should also be spiritual in nature, not corporeal; 4. the spiritual nourishment exhibited in the Lord's Supper is on the one hand based on the fulfilled works of redemption. On the other hand, it is also a present and perpetual reality; 5. the completeness and the glorified condition of Christ's body constitute its benefits for us and cannot be undermined; 6. Christ's physical body cannot be said to be present in the Lord's Supper with respect to 5, but its spiritual efficacy is surely present with respect to 3 and 4.

Calvin adamantly upheld these principles throughout his whole life. However, at this stage, Calvin did leave two essential questions unanswered in his teaching. First, if the spiritual nourishment is, as he taught, a present reality and the human body of Christ in heaven does constitute the nourishment in some sense, then what is the exact relationship between them? What makes it uniquely vivifying? How is this uniqueness reconciled with Calvin's conviction that Christ's human nature is just the same as ours? Secondly, how can the ascended body, which is contained in heaven, overcome the spatial barrier to confer the spiritual nourishment on us? The christological decision in Calvin's first exposition of the Lord's Supper calls for a fuller account on the "bridge" between Christ

Clearest Promises of God: The Development of Calvin's Eucharistic Teaching (New York: AMS Press, 1995) 82-83. Davis rightly observed that there is a development in Calvin's eucharistic teaching, especially that the appeal to the work of the Holy Spirit is not prominent in his 1536 work. However, the distinction between reception of Christ and that of his benefits cannot be contrasted too sharply. Even in his mature eucharistic teaching, Calvin could say that "we ought not simply to communicate in his body and blood, without further consideration, but to receive the fruit which comes to us from his death and passion" *Petit traité* (CO 5:438) LCC XXII 146. Although Calvin at this stage was very anxious about substance-terminology, he held that the spiritual nourishment is perpetually from Christ's body, not only confined to the past act on the cross. The subsequent introduction of the pneumatological motif, as well as the concept of substantial partaking, should be regarded as a development of continuity rather than discontinuity.

and believers. This will be accomplished by his later contemplation upon the all-important adjective “spiritual”.

II. The Emergence of “the Holy Spirit as Bond”

In Calvin’s first stay in Geneva, we observe an important development in his eucharistic teachings, namely the emergence of the conception of “Holy Spirit as bond”. Here, we can see how a pneumatological theme was integrated into the christologically- and soteriologically-conditioned doctrine of the sacrament.

In October 1536, not long after Calvin had settled in Geneva, Farel and Viret took him to participate the Lausanne Colloquy. In it, ten articles were proposed in a sermon by Farel to facilitate the discussion, and the third article read:

Holy Scripture names the Church of God all who believe that they are received by the blood of Jesus Christ alone and who constantly and without vacillation believe and wholly establish and support themselves on the Word, which, having withdrawn from us in corporeal presence, nevertheless by the virtue of his Holy Spirit [*la vertu de son saint Esprit*] fills, sustains, governs and vivifies all things.²¹

As the Colloquy proceeded to this article, the focus naturally fell on the problem of real presence of Christ’s body. As the articles were not penned by Calvin, we have reason to believe that the Reformed circle by that time had already become quite used to

²¹ *Les Articles de Lausanne* (1536) (CO 9:701) LCC XXII 35.

associate the virtue of Christ's Spirit with the problem of the real presence.²² Calvin was readily adopting this view. When he argued for the patristic support on the article, Calvin for the first time employed the notion "Spirit as bond" to elaborate the terms "spiritual" or "spiritually" in his eucharistic teachings:

we say that it is not the natural body [*le corps naturel*] of our Lord Jesus nor his natural blood [*son sang naturel*] which is given to us in his Holy Supper. We affirm that it is a spiritual communication [*communication spirituelle*], by which in virtue and in power he makes us participant of all that we are able to receive of grace in his body and blood; or again, to declare better the dignity of this mystery, it is a spiritual communication by which he makes us truly [*vrayement*] participant of his body and his blood, but wholly spiritually [*tout spirituellement*], that is by the bond of his Spirit [*le lien de son esprit*].²³

Similar qualification can also be found in Calvin's first catechism in 1537. Comparing it with the 1536 *Institutes*, one will find that the former basically follows the latter. However, in the section concerning the Lord's Supper, the notion "Spirit as bond" was added:

²² Cottret suggests that the articles were chiefly the work of Pierre Viret, see B. Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000) 123. Also, H. Heyer notices that as shown in a letter to Zwingli dated 9 June 1527, Farel's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, while agreeing with the Zurichers' understanding, displayed certain notion of mysticism, in which stress was placed on the spiritual nourishment. Also in his *la Manière et Fasson*, Farel proposed that while administering the Supper the minister can say, "the Lord who is sitting at the right of the Father lives in your hearts by his Holy Spirit"; H. Heyer, *Guillaume Farel: Essai sur le Développement de ses Idées théologiques* (Geneva: Imprimerie Ramboz et Schuchardt, 1872) 58-9. This observation agrees well with the sentiments in the Lausanne articles. Although the notion is still quite primitive compared with the spiritual presence in Calvin's mature theology, it evidences that Farel or the tradition he inherited already had come to certain notion of spiritual nourishment or spiritual communication before they were influenced by Calvin.

²³ *Deux Discours de Calvin au Colloque de Lausanne* (CO 9:884) LCC XXII 44. Wendel thought that the appeal to the third person of the Trinity first appeared as late as in the 1539 *Institutes* and before that Calvin had assigned this function to the "spirit of the Christ"; Wendel 351. If this reasoning is correct, we cannot be sure the usage in the 1539 *Institutes* either. For even there the Spirit is designated as "his Spirit", "Spirit of the Lord" or "Christ's Spirit". In the immediate context of the quoted text of the Colloquy discourse, we find another instance of "his Spirit", where it refers to the Spirit of the Father. Indeed, earlier in the 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin had unambiguously identified the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of the Father with the third person of the Trinity by alluding Rom 8:9-11; *Inst.* (1536) 45 (CO 1:59).

The symbols are bread and wine, under which the Lord exhibits the true communication [*la vraye communication/veram communicationem*] of his body and blood – but a spiritual one [*spirituelle/spiritualem*] which, obviously held together by the bond of his Spirit [*lien de son esprit/vinculo spiritus eius*], does not require an enclosed or circumscribed presence [*une presence enclose/praesentiam conclusam et circumscriptam*] either of the flesh under the bread or of the blood under the cup. For although Christ, having ascended into heaven, ceases to reside on earth (on which we are as yet wayfarers) still no distance can prevent his power from feeding his believers on himself {and bringing it about that they still enjoy the most present communication [*praesentissima communicatione*] with him, though he is absent from that place}.²⁴

Here, on the one hand, the notion was employed to qualify the “spiritual communication” as in the Lausanne Colloquy; on the other hand, Calvin extended it to handle the spatial problem implicit in his earlier parameters. The notion provides the needed language and conception which can allow Calvin to formulate some kind of connectivity without physical proximity.

Another important witness to Calvin’s employment of the notion “Spirit as bond” in this period is the Confession of Faith concerning the Eucharist in September 1537. This document was prepared by the Genevan reformers and further subscribed by the Strasbourg reformers. Since it was an official consensus between both parties, we are not sure whether it totally reflects Calvin’s full eucharistic understanding at the time. However, with reference to how adamantly Calvin later wrestled with Bullinger in achieving the *Consensus Tigurinus* in 40s,²⁵ he should at least agree with the main points

²⁴ *Instruction et confession de foy dont on use en l’église de Genève* (1537) (CO 22:69) or *Catechismus sive Christianae Religionis Institutio* (1538) (CO 5:350); English translation from I. J. Hesselink, *Calvin’s First Catechism: A Commentary* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997) 35. The text bracketed by {} was added in the 1538 document.

²⁵ In their preparatory exchange of idea, Calvin took pains to challenge Bullinger’s reservation on the notion of sacraments as instruments. Even after the agreement had been formally accepted by the

of this confession. In the confession, the notion was also employed to handle the spatial problem:

For though we as pilgrims in mortality are neither included nor contained in the same space with him [ascended Christ], yet the efficacy of his Spirit is limited by no bounds, but is able really to unite and bring together into one things that are disjoined in local space. Hence we acknowledge that his Spirit is the bond of our participation in him [*spiritum eius vinculum esse nostrae cum ipso participationis*], but in such manner that he really feeds us with the substance of the body and blood of the Lord [*carnis et sanguinis Domini substantia*] to everlasting life, and vivifies us by participation in them.²⁶

Although the basic idea is still the denial of local presence of Christ's body, a change of tone can be clearly discerned. The confession employs much more positive language to affirm that the substance of Christ's body and blood does occupy an indispensable place in our communion with Christ. In fact, an important import of this confession is to clarify the differentiation and relationship between the Holy Spirit and the substance of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament:

We confess that the spiritual life which Christ bestows upon us does not rest on the fact that he vivifies us with his Spirit, but that his Spirit makes us participants in the virtue of his vivifying flesh [*virtute carnis suae vivificae*], by which participation we are fed on eternal life. Hence when we speak of the communion which we have with Christ, we understand the faithful to communicate not less in his flesh and blood than in his Spirit [*non minus carni et sanguini eius ... quam spiritui*], so that they possess the whole Christ [*totum Christum possideant*]. Now Scripture manifestly declares the body of Christ

Zurichers, Calvin took the risk to insist on adding two articles to it so as to safeguard the conjunction between the signs and the reality. See also P. E. Rorem, "The Consensus Tigurinus (1549): Did Calvin Compromise?" in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, ed. W. H. Neuser (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1994) 72-90; T. George, "John Calvin and the Agreement of Zurich (1549)," chap. in *Calvin Studies IV, Presented at a Colloquium on Calvin Studies at Davidson College and Davidson College Presbyterian Church, Davidson, North Carolina* (Davidson, North Carolina: Davidson College, 1988) 25-40.

²⁶ *Confessio fidei de eucharistia* (1537) (CO 9:711-2) LCC XXII 168.

to be verily food for us and his blood verily drink. It thereby affirms that we ought to be truly nourished by them, if we seek life in Christ.²⁷

While the body and blood cannot be present in the sacrament in their “naked”, natural manner, the spiritual life or spiritual efficacy imparted therein should not be regarded as a “naked” operation of the Holy Spirit. The “spiritual communication” or “the Holy Spirit as bond” should not be understood in such a manner that the substance of Christ’s body and blood is totally crowded out. Any legitimate notion of possessing Christ cannot thus bypass His humanity. This differentiation by no means indicates an overturning of his earlier thoughts. As mentioned in the previous part, Calvin had vaguely recognised from the beginning that the spiritual nourishment of Christ’s body is a perpetual reality. Even under the heated polemic of the Lausanne Colloquy and with the bold statement that Christ’s natural body is not given in the sacrament, Calvin still maintained that “we are truly made participant of the body and the blood”. The change undergone was not so much on the matter as on the clarity of expression. In 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin had been very anxious about the idea of giving the “substance” of Christ’s body in the sacrament,²⁸ for that might lend support to the notion of local presence or corporeal participation. Now he felt more comfortable to describe the participation as that of the “substance” of the body and the blood. It seems that Calvin found the pneumatological notion precise enough to guard against any misinterpretation of “substantial” participation along the line

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ “Docendi causa, dicimus vere et efficaciter exhiberi, non autem naturaliter. Quo scilicet significamus, non substantiam ipsam corporis, seu verum et naturale Christi corpus illic dari: sed omnia, quae in suo corpore nobis beneficia Christus praestitit.” (By way of teaching, we say he is truly and efficaciously exhibited, but not naturally. By this we obviously mean that the very substance of his body or the true and natural body of Christ is not given there; but all those benefits which Christ has supplied us with in this body.) *Inst.* (1536) 107 (*CO* 1:123).

of corporeal participation. Indeed, for him, the whole question was not so much on the reality of participating in Christ's body as on the mode of the participation. So long as the mode of participation could be clearly expressed, Calvin had no problem in employing the word "substance" to stress the reality of the participation.²⁹ In his earlier teachings, with respect to the mode of participation Calvin had left some blank space, which was now being filled in by the emerging pneumatological motif.

After working out the details of the notion "Holy Spirit as bond" during his first stay in Geneva, Calvin finally incorporated it in the 1539 edition of his *opus magnum*:

And there is no need of this [local presence of Christ's body] for us to enjoy a participation in it, since the Lord bestows this benefit upon us through his Spirit so that we may be made one in body, spirit, and soul with him. The bond of this connection [*Vinculum ... istius coniunctionis*] is therefore the Spirit of the Lord, with whom we are joined by being bound together; and this is like a channel [*canalis*] through which all Christ is and has flows to us [*per quem quidquid Christus et est et habet ad nos derivatur*]. For if we see that the sun, shedding its beams upon the earth, casts its substance in some measure upon it in order to beget, nourish, and give growth to its offspring: why should the radiance of Christ's Spirit be less in order to impart to us the communion of his flesh and blood? On this account, Scripture, in speaking of our participation with Christ, relates its whole power to the Spirit. But one passage will suffice for many. For Paul, in the eighth chapter of Romans, states that Christ dwells in us only through his Spirit. Yet he does not take away that communion of his flesh and blood which we are now discussing, but teaches that the Spirit alone causes us to possess Christ completely and have him dwelling in us [*ut totum Christum possideamus, et habeamus in nobis manentem*].³⁰

²⁹ Later in 1543 *Institutes*, Calvin spoke up his bottom line to the use of the substantial language: "But when these absurdities [that Christ's glorified body is brought from heaven under the corruptible, earthly elements; and that property inappropriate to human nature is ascribed to Christ's body] have been set aside, I freely accept whatever can be made to express the true and substantial partaking [*veram substantialemque ... communicationem*] of the body and blood of the Lord, which is shown to believers under the sacred symbols of the Supper – and so to express it that they may be understood not to receive it solely by imagination or understanding of mind, but to enjoy the thing itself [*re ipsa*] as nourishment of eternal life" *Inst.* (1543) c. 18 (*CO* 1:1005).

³⁰ *Inst.* (1539) c. 12 (*CO* 1:1003-4).

Here we observe the same constituents: denial of local presence of Christ's body, Holy Spirit as bond to overcome the spatial problem, and an anxious remark that the communion of flesh and blood is not to be left out. What was added is the appeal to the Scripture for the invocation of the Holy Spirit. Calvin here referred us to Paul's epistle to Romans. His own commentary on the epistle appeared in March 1540, about half a year after the publication of the 1539 *Institutes*. According to de Greef, its basic material probably came from Calvin's lectures given in Geneva from 1536 to 1538.³¹ His own exegetical works may then account for his quick reception of the notion in the same period, for he was convinced that the notion was biblically sound and agreed with the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ's salvation at large. In his later writings, this notion was developed as the crowning conception to explain how we receive the salvific benefits of Christ. Before we proceed to examine its functions in Calvin's thought at large, it would be helpful to have an overall idea by looking at its functions in the eucharistic context.

III. The Holy Spirit as Bond in Calvin's Eucharistic Teachings

We will proceed to see how Calvin employed the notion of "the Holy Spirit as bond" to articulate his own solution to the problem of the real presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper.³² The main thrust of his argumentation is to replace the notion of real

³¹ W. de Greef, translated by Lyle D. Bierma, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide* (Grand Rapids/Leicester: Baker/Apollos, 1993) 94.

³² Tylenda rightly reminds us that in Calvin's own language he preferred the term "true presence" to the modern equivalence "real presence". For Calvin, the latter is too barbarous and has a strong overtone of "substantial" or "local" presence which he repudiated throughout his life. Furthermore, Tylenda remarks

local (or substantial) presence, whether in the Roman Catholic or in the Lutheran sense, with that of real spiritual presence. There are three parties involved in this problem of the real presence, namely Christ's body, the communicants and the earthly elements in the sacrament. We will examine shortly the work of the Holy Spirit with respect to the first two. But let us first ponder what the term "presence" means to Calvin.

i. Relational character of Christ's presence

As mentioned before, Calvin insisted on not singling out the problem of the real presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper, but put it within the framework of Christ's office and works as our Redeemer. His strong intuition toward the "for us" structure of Christ's salvation led him to subsume the concept of presence under our personal relationship with Christ. For Calvin, "being present" should not be restricted to the physical proximity:

But though he [Christ] has taken his flesh away from us, and in the body has ascended into heaven, yet he sits at the right hand of the Father – that is, he reigns in the Father's power and majesty and glory. This Kingdom is neither limited by any intervals of locality nor circumscribed by any dimensions, that Christ can exert his power wherever he pleases, in heaven and on earth [*quin Christus virtutem suam, ubicunque placuerit, in coelo et in terra exerat*]; that he can exhibit himself to be present in power and strength [*quin se praesentem potentia et virtute exhibeat*]; that he can be always present among his own people, lives in them, sustains, strengthens, quickens, keeps them, just so as if

that for Calvin the Lord's Supper is not so much a sacrament of presence as that of communion; J. N. Tylenda, "Calvin and Christ's Presence in the Supper - True or Real," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 27 (1974) 65-75. So when we follow the idiom of contemporary discussion to employ the word "real", our meaning is no farther than that of Calvin's "true", namely to emphasise the objectivity of Christ's presenting Himself to us in the Lord's Supper, in contrast with the mere mental activities of the communicants. As the local presence is unambiguously ruled out by the notion "the Holy Spirit as bond", we do not think the term will misconstrue Calvin's position in any substantial way. Regarding the second comment, we basically agree with Tylenda's observation and will shortly elaborate how Calvin subsumed the concept of presence under our relationship with Christ.

he were present in the body [*quin suis semper adsit, ... non secum ac si corpore adesset*].³³

Can one then say that it is only Christ's divinity which is present among the believers after the ascension? Calvin must admit that it is the divine essence which makes this uncircumscribed presence possible by its omnipresence. However, Calvin's concern was not so much on the ontological foundation of this presence as on the reality of Christ's personal activities among His own people. For him, "being present" does not mean primarily "being essentially there", but "ministering in someone's life". In this sense, Christ did not cease acting after His ascension as truly as he had done during his earthly ministry. Accordingly, His presence after the ascension is no less real than that in His body on earth. In fact, Calvin later could even say that the former is even more desirable than the latter:

For Christ left us in such a way that his presence might be more useful [*utilior*] to us – a presence that had been confined in a humble abode of flesh so long as he sojourned on earth. Therefore John, after he related that notable invitation, "If any one thirst, let him come to me," etc., added that "the Spirit had not yet been given" to believers, "for Jesus had not yet been glorified". The Lord himself also testified this to his disciples: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Holy Spirit will not come". He consoles them for his bodily absence, saying that he will not leave them orphans, but will come to them again in an invisible but more desirable way [*invisibili quidem modo, sed magis optabili*]. ... Carried up into heaven, therefore, he withdrew his bodily presence from our sight, not to cease to be present with believers still on their earthly pilgrimage, but to rule heaven and earth with a more present power [*praesentioire virtute*].³⁴

³³ *Inst.* (1536) 107 (CO 1:123).

³⁴ *Inst.* (1559) II, 16, 14 (CO 2:381). For consistency, we change the translation of "praesentioire" from "immediate" to "present".

By outpouring the Holy Spirit upon the believers, the ascended Christ continues to be present among them. After Augustine, Calvin called this kind of presence in the virtue of the Holy Spirit as “spiritual presence”. The presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper is only a special instance of this spiritual presence. In it, “being present” does not mean that Christ is there as a “thing” which is at our disposal, but that He is there as the Lord who confronts, guides and protects us. Calvin found the biblical justification for his antithesis between the corporeal and spiritual presence. The work of the Holy Spirit actualises and preserves the relational character of Christ’s presence.

ii. Substance in the spiritual condition

One of the disputed issues in the controversy between Calvin and his Lutheran critics is the meaning of “substance” in his eucharistic teaching. As we have noted before, Calvin in the 1536 *Institutes* explicitly denied that the very substance of Christ’s body is given in the sacrament. However, even in this edition, Calvin could also write, “What he bids us eat becomes, he points out, one substance with us.”³⁵ The exact meaning of the term “substance” was quite obscure in the beginning. As Calvin adopted the notion of “Holy Spirit as bond”, it also helped him to clarify his use of the term. In his mature eucharistic teachings, there are at least two different but interrelated senses of the term.³⁶

³⁵ *Inst.* (1536) 103 (CO 1:119).

³⁶ Wendel, following Gollwitzer’s suggestion, distinguishes three different senses of the term “substance” in Calvin, namely: 1. the bodily substance; 2. Christ himself as “substance of the sacrament”; 3. the spiritual substance which is given to us when we receive Christ, that is, the life, the benefits, the strength proceeding from his body; Wendel 341-3. We accept the first two, but find the third one quite misleading. In fact, Calvin did not directly designate the life infused in the communion as “spiritual substance”. His conventional expression is like this: we are substantially partaking the body of Christ, because Christ infuses his life from the substance of his body into our souls, in the secret virtue of the Holy Spirit. He

An elaboration of them can help us to understand the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Christ's humanity in the Lord's Supper.

First of all, Calvin regards Christ as the substance of the sacrament:

I say that Christ is the matter or (if you prefer) the substance of all the sacraments [*sacramentorum omnium materiam, vel ... substantiam*]; for in him they have all their solidity, and they do not promise anything apart from him.³⁷

When I wish to show the nature of this truth in familiar terms, I usually set down three things: the signification, the matter that depends upon it, and the power or effect that follows from both. The signification is contained in the promises, which are, so to speak, implicit in the sign. I call Christ with his death and resurrection [*Christum cum sua morte et resurrectione*] the matter [*materiam*], or substance [*substantiam*]. But by the effect I understand redemption, righteousness, sanctification, and eternal life, and all the other benefits Christ gives to us.³⁸

By the term "substance", Calvin referred to the spiritual reality represented or exhibited by the sacrament. It should be noted that the mystery here is not the Christ *in se*, neither his divinity nor his humanity as such; but the Christ *pro nobis* or the Christ *in communione*, who fulfilled his office for us with his death and resurrection. If the meaning of "presence" is controlled by the relational character of Christ's salvation, the same happens to the term "substance" and its participation:

tended not to single out the life or effect as some sort of "substance". A fairer categorisation can be made by discarding the third sense of the term, but elaborating the first into two conditions: one in its natural condition and the other in a life-giving, spiritual condition.

³⁷ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 14, 16 (CO 2:952-3).

³⁸ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 17, 11 (CO 2:1010).

And indeed, I do not see how anyone can trust that he has redemption and righteousness in the cross of Christ, and life in his death, unless he relies chiefly upon a true participation in Christ himself [*vera Christi ipsius communione*]. For those benefits would not come to us unless Christ first made himself ours. ... First that we may grow into one body with him [*in unum corpus cum ipso coalescamus*]; secondly, having been made partakers of his substance [*participes substantiae eius*], that we may also feel his power in partaking of all his benefits.³⁹

The substance of the sacrament is the Christ for us. And to partake the substance is then primarily not to partake something but to enter into personal relationship with someone who is the Redeemer for our sake. To emphasise the closeness of the relationship between Christ and believers, Calvin sometimes described them as “growing into one body” or “becoming one substance”. In such cases, the term “substance”, though still referring to Christ, connotes the origin, source or foundation of one’s existence. The most illuminating example of this usage can be found in Calvin’s comment on Eph. 5:29-31. Commenting on the Pauline allusion of the statement “the two will become one flesh”, Calvin readily associated the substantial relationship between the primordial couple with that between Christ and believers:

As Eve was formed out of the substance of her husband Adam, and thus was a part of him, so, if we are to be the true members of Christ, we share with His substance, and by this sharing we grow into one body [*Quemadmodum Heva ex Adae mariti sui substantia formata est, ut esset quasi pars illius: ita nos, ut simus vera Christi membra, substantiae eius communicare, et hac communicatione nos coalescere in unum corpus*]. In short, Paul describes our union to Christ, a symbol and pledge of which is given to us in the holy Supper. ... Paul declares that we are of the members and bones of Christ. Do we wonder, then, if in the Supper He offers His body to be enjoyed by us, to nourish us unto eternal life? Thus we teach that the only representation in the

³⁹ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 17, 11 (CO 2:1010). Also, “I teach that no term could better explain the mode in which the body of Christ is given to us, than the term communion, implying that we become one with him, and being ingrafted into him, truly enjoy his life.” *Ultima admonitio ad Westphalum* (1557) (CO 9:192) T&T II 414.

Supper is that whose truth and effect are taught by Paul. ... And they two [Adam and Eve] shall become one flesh. That is, they shall be one man [*unus homo*], or, to use a common phrase, they shall constitute one person [*unam personam*]; which certainly would not hold true with regard to any other relationship [*Quod nulla alia necessitudo efficit*]. All depends on this, that the wife was formed of the flesh and bones of her husband. Therefore there is the same account of union between us and Christ, that in a certain manner He pours Himself into us [*Eadem ergo unionis ratio inter nos et Christum, quod se quodammodo in nos transfundit*]. For we are not bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh, because, like ourselves, He is man, but because, by the power of His Spirit, He engrafts us into His Body, so that from Him we derive life [*Neque ... quia ipse nobiscum est homo: sed quia spiritus sui virtute nos in corpus suum inserit, ut vitam ex eo hauriamus*].⁴⁰

The term “substance” carries a strong relational accent. As the substance of Adam served as the origin or foundation of Eve’s existence, so it paved the way for their intimate relationship which exceeded all other relationships. For Calvin, the terms “one body”, “one man” or “one person” do not refer to the fusion and thus the annihilation of their distinct existences, but the intimate union of two distinct persons who share the same principle of life. Correspondingly, we also derive our spiritual life from Christ, and thus unite with him into “one body”, i.e. into an intimate relationship or union with him. This union is not a natural happening, but one in the work of the Holy Spirit. Calvin often described this life-giving union as sharing the same or common life:

I define the mode of communication without ambiguity, by saying that Christ by his boundless and wondrous powers unites us into the same life with himself [*secum in eandem vitam coalescamus*], and not only applies the fruit of his passion to us, but becomes truly ours by communicating his blessings to us, and accordingly joins us to himself, as head and members unite to form one body [*corpus unum efficiunt*]. ... I willingly embrace the saying of Augustine: As Eve was formed out of a rib of Adam, so the origin and

⁴⁰ Comm. on Eph. 5:29-31 (CO 51:225-6) CCNT 208-9.

beginning of life [*vitae originem et principium*] to us flowed from the side of Christ.⁴¹

Our explanation is that the body of Christ is eaten, because it is the spiritual nourishment of the soul. Again it is called nourishment by us in this sense, that Christ, by the incomprehensible virtue of his Spirit, infuses his life into us and makes it common to us [*nobis vitam suam inspirat, ut sit nobis communis*], just as in a tree the vital sap diffuses itself from the root among the branches, or as vigour from the head spreads to the limbs.⁴²

For Calvin, “substance” as the spiritual reality of the sacrament and “substance” as the origin and foundation of spiritual life are basically two sides of the same coin;⁴³ and the “coin” is: Christ the Redeemer present for us and partaken by us in the power of the Holy Spirit. Calvin could say that life is infused into us. But for him, the infusion of life should not be understood in a materialistic sense so that the life becomes some detachable thing which is emanated from Christ to us. The life, as well as the infusion, can only be understood within a relational context. To receive the infused life is to be incorporated into the same life with Christ Himself. We cannot have another source of life than entering into a personal relation with him. The metaphysical overtone of the term “substance” was replaced by a relational one:

⁴¹ *Dilucida explicatio sanae doctrinae de vera participatione carnis et sanguinis Christi in sacra coena ad discutiendas Heshusii nebulas* (1561) (CO 9:470). ET from LCC XXII 268.

⁴² *ibid.* (CO 9:519) LCC XXII 326.

⁴³ We prefer not to differentiate these two shades of meaning too sharply, for Calvin employed them almost in an interchangeable manner: “For this reason, I am accustomed to say that the matter and substance [*la matiere et substance*] of the sacraments is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the efficacy of them are the gifts and blessings which we have by means of him. ... It is necessary, then, that the substance should be joined with these, otherwise nothing would be firm or certain. Hence we must conclude that two things are presented to us in the Supper: Jesus Christ as source and substance [*source et matiere*] of all good; and second, the fruit and efficacy of his death and passion.”; also “all benefit which we ought to seek from the Supper is annulled, unless Jesus Christ be there given to us as substance and foundation [*substance et fondement*] of all.” *Petit traicté* (CO 5:437-8) LCC XXII 146.

When these matters have been arranged, there still arises the doubt as to the term substance [*de voce substantiae*]. To settle this, the easy method seems to be to remove the gross fancy of an eating of the flesh, as if it were like corporeal meat which is received by the mouth and descends into the stomach. For when this absurdity is out of the way, there is no reason why we should deny that we are substantially fed [*substantialiter ... pasci*] by the flesh of Christ, because we are truly united into one body with him [*vere coalescimus cum ipso in unum corpus*] by faith, and so made one with him. Hence it follows that we are joined with him by a substantial fellowship [*substantiali societate*], just as substantial vigour flows from the head to the limbs.⁴⁴

Bearing this first sense of “substance” in mind, we can then proceed to examine the second sense of the term. Calvin consistently held that both natures of Christ should be taken into account when we really possess the whole Christ, that is, to partake the substance of the sacrament in the first sense:

if the reason for communicating with Jesus Christ is in order that we have part and portion in all the gifts which he has procured for us by his death, it is not only a matter of being partakers of his Spirit [*participans de son Esprit*]; it is necessary also to partake of his humanity [*participer à son humanité*], in which he rendered complete obedience to God his Father, to satisfy our debts; though rightly speaking, the one cannot be without the other [*l'un ne se puisse faire sans l'autre*]. For when he gives himself to us, it is in order that we possess him entirely [*nous le possédions entièrement*]. For this reason, as it is said that his Spirit is our life, so he himself with his own mouth declares that his flesh is truly food, and his blood truly drink.⁴⁵

Backed with the personal union with Christ and subsumed under the basic principle of possessing the whole Christ, the term “substance” can also refer to the physical substance of Christ’s humanity:

We acknowledge, then, without any equivocation, that the flesh of Christ [*Carnem ... Christi*] gives life, not only because we once obtained salvation

⁴⁴ *Dilucida explicatio* (CO 9:521) LCC XXII 328-9.

⁴⁵ *Petit traicté* (CO 5:438) LCC XXII 146-7.

by it, but because now, while we are made one with Christ by a sacred union [*sacra unitate cum Christo coalescimus*], the same flesh [*eadem illa caro*] breathes life into us, or, to express it more briefly, because ingrafted into the body of Christ by the secret agency of the Spirit, we have life in common with him.⁴⁶

Therefore when we see the visible sign, we ought to regard what representation it carries and by whom it is given us. The bread is given to symbolise the body of Jesus Christ, with command that we eat it; and it is given us by God who is certain and immutable truth. ... If there were nothing more, we have good reason to be satisfied when we realise that Jesus Christ gives us in the Supper the proper substance of his body and his blood [*la propre substance de son corps et son sang*], so that we may possess him fully [*nous le possédions pleinement*], and, possessing him, have part in all his blessings.⁴⁷

To partake the substance of Christ's body is not an end in itself, but it is the ordained way to possess the whole Christ. According to the theological parameters Calvin laid down in the 1536 *Institutes*, the essential attributes of this substance, including its definite dimension and locality, should remain unchanged even in its glorious condition. Therefore, it cannot be locally present under the elements in the Lord's Supper and subsequently pass into our own being. Calvin strenuously denied any notion of local presence or corporeal partaking of this substance throughout his life:

I frankly confess that I reject their teaching of the mixture [*mixturam*], or transfusion [*transfusionem*], of Christ's flesh with our soul. For it is enough for us that, from the substance of his flesh Christ breathes life into our souls –

⁴⁶ *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de sacramentis* (1555) (CO 9:30) T&T II 238.

⁴⁷ *Petit traité* (CO 5:440) LCC XXII 148. Since we cannot possess Christ without at the same time partaking the substance of His body, Calvin sometimes directly calls the body of Christ the internal substance of the sacrament: "For otherwise what would it mean that we eat the bread and drink the wine as a sign that his flesh is our food and his blood our drink, if he gave only bread and wine and left the spiritual reality behind? Would it not be under false colours that he had instituted this mystery? We have then to confess that if the representation which God grants in the Supper is veracious, the internal substance [*la substance interieure*] of the sacrament is joined with the visible signs; and as the bread is distributed by hand, so the body of Christ is communicated to us, so that we are made partakers of it." *ibid.*

indeed, pours forth his very life into us – even though Christ’s flesh itself does not enter into us [*in nos non ingrediatur ipsa Christi caro*].⁴⁸

Though I confess that our souls are truly fed by the substance of Christ’s flesh, I certainly do this day, not less than formerly, repudiate the substantial presence [*substantialem praesentiam*] which Westphal imagines: for though the flesh of Christ gives us life, it does not follow that his substance must be transferred [*transfundi*] into us. ... I said that the body of Christ is exhibited in the Supper effectually, not naturally, - in respect of virtue, not in respect of substance [*secundum virtutem, non secundum substantiam*]. In this last term I referred to a local infusion of substance [*localis substantiae inclusio*].⁴⁹

For Calvin, this substance in fact cannot function as our food and our drink in its natural, “naked” condition:

For nothing is more beyond the natural [*praeter naturam*] than that souls should borrow spiritual and heavenly life from a flesh that had its origin from earth, and underwent death. There is nothing more incredible than that things severed and removed from one another by the whole space between heaven and earth should not only be connected across such a great distance but also be united, so that souls may receive nourishment from Christ’s flesh.⁵⁰

Meanwhile we do not deny that this mode is incomprehensible to the human mind; because flesh can by nature [*naturaliter*] neither be the life of the soul nor exercise its power upon us from heaven.⁵¹

To be our food and our drink, the substance of Christ’s body must be “energised” to a spiritual condition by the divine influence:

Yet Christ’s flesh itself in the mystery of the Supper is a thing no less spiritual [*spiritualis res*] than our eternal salvation.⁵²

⁴⁸ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 17, 32 (CO 2:1033).

⁴⁹ *Secunda defensio piae et orthodoxae de sacramentis fidei contra Ioachimi Westphali calumnias* (1556) (CO 9:70) T&T II, 277-8.

⁵⁰ *Institutes* (1559) IV, 17, 24 (CO 2:1023).

⁵¹ *Dilucida explicatio* (CO 9:521) LCC XXII 328.

⁵² *Inst.* (1559) IV, 17, 33 (CO 2:1034).

But the flesh of Christ does not of itself have a power so great as to quicken us, for in its first condition it was subject to mortality; and now, endowed with immortality, it does not live through itself. Nevertheless, since it is pervaded with fullness of life to be transmitted to us, it is rightly called “life-giving”. ... We can explain the nature of this by a familiar example. Water is sometimes drunk from a spring, sometimes drawn, sometimes led by channels to water the fields, yet it does not flow forth from itself for so many uses, but from the very source, which by unceasing flow supplies and serves it. In like manner, the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain [*fontis ... divitis et inexhausti*] that pours into us the life springing forth from the Godhead [*a divinitate*] into itself. Now who does not see that communion of Christ’s flesh and blood is necessary for all who aspire to heavenly life?⁵³

Confusingly enough, Calvin could sometimes replace this distinction of natural-spiritual conditions of the substance of Christ’s body with another pair of philosophical terms, namely the distinction of substance-quality:

Now then, until we are of the substance of our Lord Jesus Christ [*nous soyons de la substance de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ*], God is bound to hate us and abhor us, and not recognise us as of the number and company of his creatures. It remains to see how it comes to pass that we are of the bones of Jesus Christ, and of his flesh. For he is in heaven, and we are here below on earth. Again, when we are created, every one of us is created according to the order of nature [*chacun sera créé selon l’ordre de nature*]. He has his father and his mother, and they are of the same race from which he is descended. How then are we of the bones of Jesus Christ? Now that does not refer to the substance [*cela ne se rapporte pas à la substance*]. For if we look at our own flesh, neither the skin, nor the flesh that we have come of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ; but it is because the curse which we bring from our mother’s womb, and which is spread throughout Adam’s lineage, is taken away by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that along with this he has so shed forth the grace of his Holy Spirit upon us that we are enlightened by it. Therefore that is as a quality (as men call it) and not a substance [*Cela donc est comme une qualité (que on appelle), et non pas substance*].⁵⁴

⁵³ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 17, 9 (CO 2:1008-9). Also *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de sacramentis* (CO 9:31) T&T II 238: “For from the hidden fountain of the Godhead [*ex abscondito deitatis fonte*] life was miraculously infused into the body of Christ, that it might flow from thence to us.”

⁵⁴ Sermon 41 on Eph. 5:28-50 (CO 51:770). English translation is modified from *Sermons on Ephesians*, A. Golding (trans.) (1577; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973) 603.

Here, the term *substance* stands for the substance in its natural, created order, which is equivalent to the essential properties of Christ's human nature in Calvin's thought. According to Calvin, Christ's humanity should be exactly the same as ours at this level. And it does not refer to this respect that we are said to be of one substance or one body with Christ. On the other hand, the term *qualité* stands for the peculiar, spiritual quality of the substance. With respect to it, Christ's human nature is uniquely life-giving, and we are said to be bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh. This quality is the result of the divine influence. However, Calvin did not allow the divine influence to be understood simply from the level of essence. The energisation of the humanity was actually accomplished in the power of the third person of the Trinity:

He [Christ in John 6:63] does not therefore exclude every kind of usefulness, as if none could be derived from his flesh; he only declares that it will be useless if it is separated from the Spirit [*a spiritu separetur*]. How then has flesh the power of vivifying, except by being spiritual [*spiritualis*]? Whoever therefore stops short at the earthly nature of flesh will find nothing in it but what is dead; but those who raise their eyes to the virtue of the Spirit with which the flesh is pervaded [*spiritus virtutem, qua perfusa est caro*], will learn by the effect and experience of faith that it is not without good cause said to be vivifying.⁵⁵

When I say that the flesh and blood of Christ are substantially offered and exhibited to us in the Supper, I at the same time explain the mode, namely, that the flesh of Christ becomes vivifying [*sit vivifica*] to us, inasmuch as Christ, by the incomprehensible virtue of his Spirit [*incomprehensibili spiritus sui virtute*], transfuses his own proper life into us from the substance of his flesh, so that he himself lives in us, and his life is common to us.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Dilucida explicatio* (CO 9:511) LCC XXII 316.

⁵⁶ *ibid.* (CO 9:470) LCC XXII 267.

In addition to becoming vivifying, the substance of the humanity should overcome its spatial limitation before it can be partaken by us. This is attained, of course, through the divine omnipresence, but again its application is not taken as a direct influence of the divine essence but as a work of the third person:

For us to have substantial communion [*substantialis communicatio*] with the flesh of Christ, there is no necessity for any change of place, since by the secret virtue of the Spirit [*arcana spiritus virtute*] he infuses his life into us from heaven; nor does distance at all prevent Christ from dwelling in us, or us from being one with him, since the efficacy of the Spirit surmounts all natural obstacles [*efficacia spiritus cunctis naturalibus obstaculis sit superior*].⁵⁷

In opposition to this [infusion of substance] it is said that the body of Christ is given to us in the Supper spiritually [*spiritualiter*], because the secret virtue of the Spirit [*arcana spiritus sancti virtus*] makes things separated in space to be united with each other [*quae locorum spatio distant, inter se uniantur*], and accordingly enables life from the flesh of Christ to reach us from heaven.⁵⁸

In sum, the work of the Holy Spirit on Christ's humanity in the Lord's Supper is twofold. On the one hand, He unites it with the divinity without destroying their distinctiveness. On the other hand, He unites it with the communicants without destroying their distinctiveness, including their respective locality. In either case, life, virtue or effect is translated from the stronger to the weaker. However, this translation is not singled out as a mechanical process, but is encompassed in a union within the person of the Mediator in the former or in an interpersonal union between the Mediator and the communicants in the latter.

⁵⁷ ibid. (CO 9:478) LCC XXII 278.

⁵⁸ ibid. (CO 9:522) LCC XXII 329.

The notion of the non-local mode of partaking Christ's body was prone to misunderstanding. Calvin's own language can easily mislead others in thinking that what is actually partaken by the communicants in the sacrament is only the life or effect of Christ's body,⁵⁹ not Christ's body itself. This confusion already happened in Calvin's own time. Heshusius, Calvin's Lutheran contemporary, once accused Calvin of being an *Energicus* (Energist), for he thought that in Calvin's teaching only the virtue of Christ's body and not the body itself is in the Supper.⁶⁰ Heshusius' charge is definitely right if the preposition "in" is taken in its strongest spatial sense, for Calvin consistently admitted that in his teaching only the virtue of Christ's body locally enters into us, not its natural substance. But if the "in" is interpreted less spatially as "in the event of", the accusation is false, for it misconstrues that Christ's body is only briefly related to the event and only half-heartedly named as the substance of the sacrament. With clumsy exactitude, we may express Calvin's idea as follows: this local virtue (or infused life) results from a local communion with Christ (communicant being united into the same life with Christ), which takes place through a non-local communion with (or partaking of) the substance of Christ's body in the supra-spatial power of the Holy Spirit. It is quite beyond Calvin's intention to let the effect become a separate entity and thus practically take the place of the substance.⁶¹ Nor should the effect be regarded as an emanation or another form of the substance. For Calvin, it is not possible to partake the effect apart from the substance or

⁵⁹ Gollwitzer's and Wendel's "spiritual substance" is an example in our own time.

⁶⁰ *Dilucida explicatio* (CO 9:466) LCC XXII 263.

⁶¹ "This power and faculty of vivifying [vis et facultas vivificandi] might not improperly be said to be something abstracted from the substance [abstractum aliquid a substantia], provided it be truly and distinctly understood that the body of Christ remains in heaven, and yet from its substance life flows and comes to us who are pilgrims on earth." *Dilucida explicatio* (CO 9:522) LCC XXII 329.

vice versa. This notion of energism will undermine the relational character of the communion with Christ as much as that of the local presence of Christ's body, which Calvin ardently rejected.

iii. Partakers in the spiritual condition

As mentioned before, Calvin adhered to the Reformation axioms *solus Christus* and *sola fide* in developing his eucharistic teaching. These axioms determine the basic relational character of his teaching. With respect to the human side of the problem of real presence, Calvin regarded Christian faith as the way or vessel of reception in partaking Christ:

We admit indeed, meanwhile, that this is no other eating than that of faith, as no other can be imagined. But here is the difference between my words and theirs: for them to eat is only to believe; I say that we eat Christ's flesh in believing, because it is made ours by faith, and that this eating is the result and effect of faith [*fructum effectumque fidei*]. Or if you want it said more clearly, for them eating is faith; for me it seems rather to follow from faith. This is a small difference indeed in words, but no slight one in the matter itself. For even though the apostle teaches that "Christ dwells in our hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:17), no one will interpret this indwelling to be faith, but all feel that he is there expressing a remarkable effect of faith, for through this believers gain Christ abiding in them.⁶²

For it is most true, that every one receives from the sign just as much benefit as his vessel of faith [*fidei vase*] can contain.⁶³

⁶² *Inst.* (1559) IV, 17, 5 (CO 2:1006).

⁶³ *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de sacramentis* (1555) (CO 9:25) T&T II 232.

While Calvin distinguished partaking of Christ's body from faith, they nevertheless share the same relational character. For Calvin, faith can really be Christian, only when it leads us to a personal relationship with Christ:

we must be advised that there are two forms of faith. One is this: if someone believes that God is, he thinks that the history related concerning Christ is true. ... But this is of no importance: thus it is unworthy to be called "faith" ... The other is the faith whereby we not only believe that God and Christ are, but also believe in God and Christ, truly acknowledging Him as our God and Christ as our Saviour. Now this is not only to adjudge true all that has been written or is said of God and Christ: but to put all hope and trust in one God and Christ, and to be so strengthened by this thought, that we have no doubt about God's good will toward us.⁶⁴

Faith is not an indifferent knowledge of some historical facts, but a personal trust in God and Christ. Governed by this personal character, the words of institution in the sacrament should not be regarded as an address to the element like a magic incantation, but to the communicants as an exhortation of faith:

For we ought to understand the word not as one whispered without meaning and without faith, a mere noise, like a magic incantation, which has the force to consecrate the element. Rather, it should, when preached, make us understand what the visible sign means. ... You see how the sacrament requires preaching to beget faith.⁶⁵

Furthermore, Calvin observed that there is an ascending character in Christian faith, which in turn determines the ascending character of our partaking in Christ:

It is as if he [Paul] said: faith itself is a sure and certain possession of those things God has promised us. ... meanwhile that we can only possess those things if we exceed the total capacity of our own nature, and press our

⁶⁴ *Inst.* (1536) 42-43 (CO 1:56).

⁶⁵ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 14, 4 (CO 2:943-4).

keenness of vision beyond all things which are in the world [*ac supra omnia quae in mundo sunt aciem nostram intendamus*], in short, surpass ourselves.⁶⁶

We are joined to Christ only if our minds rise above the world. Accordingly the bond of our union with Christ [*cum Christo coniunctionis vinculum*] is faith, which raises us upwards and casts its anchor in heaven [*quae sursum nos attollit, et anchoram suam iacit in coelo*], so that, instead of subjecting Christ to the fictions of our reason, we seek him above in his glory.⁶⁷

However, we can never raise ourselves upwards by our own nature, for “it is not possible for the human mind, leaping for the infinite spaces, to reach beyond heaven itself to Christ”.⁶⁸ As the substance of Christ’s body cannot be life-giving on its own, so our human mind is not life-receiving on its own. The Holy Spirit, who energises Christ’s body to a spiritual condition, also energises our soul to a new spiritual condition so as to become receptive:

But suppose it is true ... that what sight does in our eyes for seeing light, and what hearing does in our ears for perceiving a voice, are analogous to the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, which is to conceive, sustain, nourish, and establish faith. ... There is only this difference: that our ears and eyes have naturally received the faculty of hearing and seeing; but Christ does the same thing in our hearts by special grace beyond the measure of nature [*praeter naturae modum speciali gratia*].⁶⁹

For although he [Christ] adheres to his body as Mediator, yet the Spirit is the bond of sacred union [*vinculum sacrae coniunctionis*], who, raising our souls upwards by faith [*animas nostras sursum fide attollens*], infuses life into us from the heavenly head.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Inst.* (1536), 43 (*CO* 1:57).

⁶⁷ *Dilucida explicatio* (*CO* 9:522) *LCC* XXII 330. It is interesting to note that faith sometimes shares the title of the Holy Spirit as the “vinculum” between Christ and us.

⁶⁸ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 17, 15 (*CO* 2:1014).

⁶⁹ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 14, 9 (*CO* 2:947-8).

⁷⁰ *Ultima admonitio* (*CO* 9:174) *T&T* II 390.

As Christ's humanity is present in the Lord's Supper non-locally, so the raising of our souls should be understood in a non-spatial manner. Spatial connectivity is not only unnecessary, but also dangerously undermines the elevating and uniting work of the Holy Spirit. In fact, out of the fear of idolatry, Calvin's spirituality called for constant moving away from the worldly things. As a result, the spatial separateness highlighted in Christ's manifest ascension is a "healthy" reminder to believers regarding the nature of divine influence:

Scripture itself also not only carefully recounts to us the ascension of Christ, by which he withdrew the presence of his body from our sight and company, to shake from us all carnal thinking of him, but also, whenever it recalls him, bids our minds be raised up, and seek him in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father (Col. 3:1-2). According to this rule, we ought rather to have adored him spiritually in heavenly glory than to have devised some dangerous kind of adoration, replete with a carnal and crass conception of God.⁷¹

This [showing the beginning of his kingship and priesthood through ascension] is some part, but not the whole. He [Christ] declared to the apostles that his departure was expedient for them, because if he did not go away the Spirit would not come. Could the Spirit not come while he was present? The meaning is, that it was necessary that their minds should be raised upwards to receive his divine influence. Of the same import is his saying to Mary – Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. Why, do we suppose, was Christ unwilling that his feet should be embraced, but just that he wished henceforth to be touched by faith only? This too is the reason why a cloud received him out of their sight.⁷²

In short, at the human end, the Holy Spirit is energising the communicants to a spiritual condition so that they become responsive and ready to enter into the personal communion with Christ. This spiritual condition is their faith in Christ.

⁷¹ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 17,36 (CO 2:1039).

⁷² *Ultima admonitio* (CO 9:222) T&T II 455.

We have seen briefly how the notion “Holy Spirit as bond” functions in Calvin’s eucharistic teaching. On the side of Christ, the Holy Spirit elevates the humanity to a spiritual condition and unites it with the divinity. On the side of believers, He elevates their soul to a spiritual condition and unites them to Christ. In both cases, He safeguards the union and distinctiveness of the involved parties. Following this outline, we will examine in greater detail how this pneumatological notion is co-ordinated with Calvin’s thought at large. We will first spend the next three chapters on its functions in relation to the person and work of Christ, then another two chapters on those in relation to the reception of Christ’s salvific benefits in the life of believers.

Chapter 3

The Holy Spirit as Bond and *Persona* in the Trinitarian Context

In this chapter, we will proceed to examine “the Holy Spirit as bond” in relation to the person of Christ. We will first explore the peculiarity of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity. This can be done by investigating Calvin’s concept of person in his trinitarian teaching. Through this process, we can also clarify the relation between the *extra Calvinisticum* and the *Filioque* in Calvin’s thought. Calvin’s trinitarian teaching is basically in line with the Western tradition in emphasising the unity of God. But this emphasis is determined not so much by certain metaphysical presuppositions, as by his conviction that Christian faith stands or falls with the confession that Christ is our God. This conviction is consolidated in his defence of Christ’s and the Spirit’s aseity, and subsequently shapes his definition of divine person. Divine distinction is then intrinsically connected with divine unity. This can be seen in Calvin’s peculiar doctrine of order, as well as the personal distinction of the Spirit. When the trinitarian discussion is correlated with the *extra Calvinisticum*, the concern about unity of God is transposed to our union with God. In this context, the *Filioque* becomes a necessary corollary for safeguarding the efficacy of our salvation.

I. Christ’s and the Spirit’s Aseity

Before we can examine the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, we should first draw attention to the controlling theme of Calvin’s trinitarian teachings as a whole, that

is, the aseity of Christ and the Spirit.¹ This was first clearly seen from, if not actually caused by, his response to the charge of Arianism raised by Peter Caroli in 1537. In the *Confessio de Trinitate* presented in the Lausanne synod, Calvin twice confessed the Son as the eternal God by explicitly ascribing the tetragrammaton to Him:

Indeed the Son is called there both יהוה, and the mighty God, and the God to be praised forever, whom all angels of God adore, whose throne was established from eternity to eternity, what cannot be applicable in any way but to the one, true, eternal God are then all ascribed to Him [*tum omnia illi deferuntur, quae nisi in unum verum aeternum Deum competere nullo modo possunt*].²

For before He put on flesh, that Word was eternal, begotten from the Father before ages, true God, of one essence, power, majesty with the Father, and thus Himself יהוה who always had His being from Himself, and instilled the power of subsisting to others [*Nam antequam carnem indueret, Verbum illud aeternum fuit, ex Patre ante saecula genitum, verus Deus, unius cum Patre essentiae, potentiae, maiestatis, adeoque ipse יהוה qui a seipso semper habuit ut esset, et aliis subsistendi virtutem inspiravit*].³

Christ is thus unambiguously confessed as the one God with the Father, possessing the one essence, power, majesty and glory. This emphasis on the unity of God is of course the mainstream teaching of the West after Augustine. However, a formal repetition of the tradition cannot account for its exceptional bearing in Calvin's thought. It is to be noted that the invocation of the tetragrammaton in fact aroused the doubt of some attending ministers of the synod, who were no less exposed to the Augustinian

¹ For Calvin's doctrine of Trinity, see T. F. Torrance, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 25 (1990) 165-193; B. B. Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity," chap. in *Calvin and Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000) 189-284; W. Krusche, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957) 1-13.

² *Confessio de Trinitate* (1537) (COR III 2:146-7).

³ *Confessio de Trinitate* (1537) (COR III 2:148-9).

tradition than Calvin himself. Caroli was not slow in making use of it to attack Calvin.⁴

As a result, Calvin was demanded to clarify his meaning with an addendum *de Christo Iehova*:

That we assert Christ is Jehovah, who always had His being from Himself [*qui a seipo semper habuit ut esset*], ... we are going to indicate briefly. As He is the Word according to the divinity of Christ, what are proper to God are all rightly ascribed to Him, because, as the mention of the distinction, which is between the Father and the Son, has been disregarded, He is then considered according to the essence of the one God [*quae Dei propria sunt iure omnia illi deferuntur, quia tum in unius Dei essentiam respicitur, praeterita distinctionis mentione, quae est inter Patrem et Filium*]. By this true reason, it is said that Christ is truly the sole and eternal God, existing from Himself [*Christum vere esse Deum unicum et aeternum a seipso existentem*].⁵

Calvin found himself compelled by the scriptural testimony to confess Christ's deity to such an extent that Christ cannot owe His own existence to any other source than Himself. In other words, when we think of whence Christ came to be, our answer should not be sought from the distinction between the Father and the Son, but rather from the unity and aseity of the one God.⁶ This theological decision was made not so

⁴ Caroli's attack on Calvin's use of the tetragrammaton and thus his understanding of Christ's aseity was not totally in vain, seeing that Calvin actually described it as *calumnia omnium atrocissima* when he remembered this 1537 incident in his 1545 *Defensio Gallasii* (CO 7:322). In fact, the aftermath of the calumny was still so annoying Calvin as late as in January that year, that he had to write a long letter to the ministers of Neuchâtel to explain his position (Ep. 607, CO12:13-20). Moreover, the observation that there is a verbatim connection between this pseudonymous defence and the content of his letters to the ministers of Neuchâtel (cf. CO 7:323-4, CO 11:560-1 Ep. 474 & CO 12:16-18 Ep. 607) suggests us that Calvin was trying to crush a hanging suspicion of his deviating from the tradition by giving a fuller refutation of a passé calumny.

⁵ *Confessio de Trinitate* (1537) (COR III 2:151-2).

⁶ *Confessio de Trinitate* (1537) (COR III 2:146): "Truly He [the one God], who alone both has in Himself and from Himself the subsisting power and grants it to all creatures, is of eternal, infinite and spiritual essence [*Nempe essentiae aeternae, infinitae et spiritualis, qui et solus in seipso vim subsistendi a seque ipso habeat et eam creaturis omnibus largiatur*]; also, *Impietas Valentini Gentilis detecta et palam traducta* (1561) (CO 9:368): "Yet Paul [says], we all are caused to stand before the tribunal of Christ, because it was written: I live, says the Lord, all knees will bow to me (Rom. 14:10). We see that he with Isaiah applies to the person of Christ whatever glory and authority God possesses for Himself. What is more

much to satisfy theoretical consistency or speculative curiosity, as to lay a solid ground for practical piety:

For as He [Christ] is called our life, light, salvation, righteousness, sanctification [*vita, lumen, salus, iustitia, sanctificatio nostra*], so we are taught to store all trust and hope in Him and invoke His name. This practical knowledge [*Quae practica notitia*] is no doubt more certain than any idle speculation. Indeed, the pious soul sees and almost touches the utterly present God at the place where it experiences itself to be quickened, enlightened, saved, justified and sanctified [*Illic enim pius animus Deum praesentissimum conspicit et paene attrectat, ubi se vivificari, illuminari, salvari, iustificari ac sanctificari sentit*].⁷

In other words, for Calvin, the gospel of Christ, together with all its benefits for us, stands or falls with Christ's identity with the one God, in which His aseity is necessarily included. By the same token, we have to assert the full deity of the Spirit, if the benefits are really communicated to us:

Hence proof is to be sought also from the same sources for confirming the divinity of the Holy Spirit. ... Indeed, He is who, diffused everywhere, sustains, invigorates and quickens all things; who, dwelling in believers, leads them into all truth, regenerates, sanctifies and will quicken them to fullness in the future.⁸

Here Calvin did not argue the aseity of the Spirit as explicitly as that of the Son. But for him, once the aseity of Christ is secured, that of the Spirit becomes self-evident. This parallel between the Son and the Spirit was expressly added, when the *Confessio* was later absorbed into the 1539 *Institutes*:

proper to God than to live? Or what else is αὐτουσία? Paul makes this glory common to Christ with the Father."

⁷ *Confessio de Trinitate* (1537) (COR III 2:147).

⁸ *Confessio de Trinitate* (1537) (COR III 2:147).

In short, to Him [the Spirit], as to the Son, are ascribed functions that especially belong to divinity [*Denique in ipsum omnia, ut in filium, conferuntur, quae maxime propria sunt divinitatis officia*]. ... Thus through Him we come into communion with God, so that we in a way feel His life-giving power towards us. Our justification is His work [*Iustificatio nostra eius opus est*]. From Him is power, sanctification, truth, grace and every good thing that can be conceived [*potentia, sanctificatio, veritas, gratia, et quidquid boni cogitari potest*], since there is but one Spirit from whom flows every sort of gift (1 Cor. 12:11).⁹

The long-expected ascription of the tetragrammaton to the Spirit, the hallmark of His aseity, was finally added in the 1559 *Institutes*:

Indeed, where the prophets usually say that the words they utter are those of the Lord of Hosts, Christ and the apostles refer them to the Holy Spirit. It therefore follows that he who is pre-eminently the author of prophecies is truly Jehovah [*verum esse Iehovam, qui praecipuus est prophetiarum autor*].¹⁰

Technically speaking, Calvin's defence against Caroli's charge of Arianism is very effective. By affirming the unity of God as well as the aseity of both Christ and the Spirit, Calvin shunned the slightest variant of trinitarian subordinationism or tritheism. The crux of his thought is then how to escape the Charybdis of modalism in his sensitive fleeing from the Scylla of subordinationism and tritheism. We will then proceed to examine how this special concern of aseity shapes Calvin's understanding of divine distinction. This can be seen in the development of his definition of divine person or subsistence.

⁹ *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (*CO* 1:488). Also *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 14.

¹⁰ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 15 (*CO* 2:103).

II. Distinction in unity: Calvin's understanding of divine person

In 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin offered us the simplest formula of the trinitarian faith, which he would retain in all the subsequent editions:

Would that they [non-biblical terms like *ousia*, *hypostasis*] had been buried, provided only among all men this faith were agreed on: that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, yet that the Son is not the Father, nor the Holy Spirit the Son; but that they are differentiated by a certain property [*proprietas quadam esse distinctos*].¹¹

Two things are to be noted here. First, although terms like *persona* or *hypostasis* were long provided in the tradition, Calvin found it perfectly feasible to bypass them and express the idea of “threeness” by simply repeating the revealed names. Secondly, the most “non-technical” way to articulate the distinction between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is “*proprietas quadam esse distinctos*”. We are not told what exactly this property is. Its introduction only indicates that in some mysterious way the divine persons are not collapsed to an undifferentiated monad, though they are actually one God. In the 1539 edition, Calvin supplemented this formula with an interesting

¹¹ *Inst.* (1536) 48 (CO 1:62). Regarding the definition of *proprietas*, Muller writes, “*proprietas*: property; specifically, an intimate, incommunicable property; thus the incommunicable attributes of God and the personal properties (*proprietas personales*) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *paternitas* (paternity), *filiatio* (filiation), and *processio* (procession), which belong to the persons of the Trinity individually. Considered as descriptions of the relations between the persons, these personal properties are termed personal relations.” R. A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985) 250. Although we will consistently render *proprietas* as “property”, it should be noted that Calvin himself did not define the term as clearly as the later protestant scholastic theologians did. In fact, he did not explicitly and unambiguously identify *proprietas* with *relatio* or *ordo* in his trinitarian teachings. See also (CO 1:493) and *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 5 (CO 2:92).

exposition on Heb. 1:3, suggesting that the patristic use of the term “hypostasis” actually harks back to the same basic meaning:

And yet the term “hypostasis” in the apostle’s sense (Heb 1:3), unless I am mistaken, appears to signify the same [meaning], with which the ancients used [the term], when he calls the Son “the stamp of the hypostasis of God the Father”. Nor indeed do I agree with those, who in this passage interpret hypostasis as essence, as if Christ, like wax imprinted with a seal, represented in himself the substance of the Father; but rather I think that the author of the epistle wanted to say that the Father, though distinct with his own property [*quamvis sua proprietate distinctum*], yet expressed himself wholly in the Son, so that the former’s very hypostasis shone forth in the latter.¹²

So, the permanent distinction within the one God had been first intuitively grasped from the clear testimony of the Scripture. All subsequent development basically served to preserve this knowledge, and Calvin had a simple confidence that what he conceived from the biblical testimony was exactly what the ancient exponents had then conceived and defended with more technical articulation. Squaring with the conviction that the theological substance is far more important than language, Calvin did not follow, let alone impose, a rigid rule in employing terminology. In explaining what the “One” and the “Three” stand for, he paid homage to the patristic contribution:

Therefore, one and three, one God, one essence [*una essentia*]. What three? Not three gods, nor three essences. In order to signify both, the orthodox ancients said that there is one ousia, three hypostaseis, that is, one substance [*substantiam unam*], three subsistences in one substance [*tres in una substantia subsistentias*].¹³

They, who then had piety at heart, ... affirmed that truly in one God [*uno Deo*] subsist three persons [*tres personas*], or (what was the same) in the

¹² *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (CO 1:493-4).

¹³ *Inst.* (1536) 45 (CO 1:59).

unity of God [*Dei unitate*] subsists a trinity of persons [*personarum trinitatem*].¹⁴

But, at the same time, Calvin could not help betraying his minimalist attitude towards theologisation, as he was prepared to say the same thing with the “simpler” word *proprietas*:

They, who then had piety at heart, ... loudly responded that truly three properties [*tres proprietates*] are to be recognised in one God [*uno Deo*].¹⁵

When we hear ‘one’, the unity of substance [*substantiae unitatem*] is to be understood; when we hear ‘three’, in this one essence yet three properties are to be distinguished [*in una hac essentia distinguendas tamen tres proprietates*].¹⁶

Here we can see that Calvin, in a somewhat casual way, could use *proprietas* interchangeably with *hypostasis*, *subsistentia* or *persona*. This habit was retained even in his later writings. Based on it, some scholars comment that Calvin gave his doctrine of the Trinity a slightly-modalising outlook.¹⁷ However, if we do not stretch his

¹⁴ *Inst.* (1536) 48 (CO 1:62).

¹⁵ *Inst.* (1536) 48 (CO 1:62).

¹⁶ *Inst.* (1536) 48 (CO 1:62). The last sentence is changed to “in una hac essentia trinitatem proprietatum esse considerandam” in the 1539 edition, which is in turn replaced by “in una essentia personas notari in hac trinitate” in the 1559 edition. In the 1559 edition, a new section is introduced to give a more detailed exposition of the terms “persona” or “subsistentia”. This change from “proprietas” to the more technical term “persona” is obviously an adaptation to this new arrangement. This advance in technical precision is compelled by the threat of anti-trinitarianism throughout the years.

¹⁷ Krusche, following E. Wolf, thinks that Calvin’s language leaves a modalising appearance (Krusche 6-11). He also suggests that Calvin’s ascribing the concept “Wisdom” to the Son and “Power” to the Spirit is responsible for this tendency of “slight modalising”, for these terms have a natural bearing towards an impersonal understanding (Krusche 10). We can agree with him that Calvin’s language is far from satisfactory here, but the so-called modalising tendency is more a matter of appearance than of substance. Further, the concept of “Wisdom” and “Power” are commonly employed in patristic literature and are well shared by Cappadocian Fathers, for whom modalism is the last thing we can imagine. When we say that they have a natural bearing towards an “impersonal” understanding, it may be wise to examine our own concept of “Person” and take seriously Calvin’s warning: “They [ancient teachers] said that in God there were three persons, not as if we speak in ordinary language calling three men three persons, or as in the

language to the limit, his intention is reasonably clear: both the more sophisticated “hypostasis” and the less technical “proprietas” are employed to signify the same basic idea that “the words ‘Father’, ‘Son’ and ‘Spirit’ imply a real distinction”.¹⁸ When it was required by the context, Calvin did not fail in demonstrating his ability to differentiate *persona* from *proprietas*. This can be seen in his full-blown definition of *persona* or *subsistentia* in the definitive edition of *Institutes*:

By laying aside disputation over terms, I shall proceed to speak of the thing itself: “Person”, therefore, I call a “subsistence” in God’s essence, which, while related to the others, is distinguished by an incommunicable property [*Personam igitur voco subsistentiam in Dei essentia, quae ad alios relata, proprietate incommunicabili distinguitur*].¹⁹

Here the inchoate notion that they “*proprietate quadam esse distinctos*” is refined by two new qualifiers: the adjective “incommunicabili” and the phrase “ad alios relata”. We will first focus on the first and turn to the second later. Regarding the “incommunicabilis proprietas”, Calvin explains:

whatever is proper to each individually [*singulis proprium est*], I maintain to be incommunicable [*incommunicabile*] because whatever is attributed to the Father as a mark of differentiation [*notam discretionis*] cannot belong to, or be transferred to the Son [*in Filium competere vel transferri non potest*].²⁰

Papacy they even have the audacity to paint three grotesque pictures, and behold the Trinity!” Sermon on John 1:1-5 (CO 47:473).

¹⁸ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 17 (CO 2:104).

¹⁹ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 6 (CO 2:94).

²⁰ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 6 (CO 2:94). For sake of consistency, we change the translation of *notam discretionis* from “distinguished mark” to “mark of differentiation”

The same basic idea of “*proprietas quadam*” is repeated in this refinement. So what does the new “*proprietas incommunicabili*” contribute in our understanding of the Three? Certainly it is now more explicitly stated that the property of each cannot be transferred to the other, and thus each is irreducible over against one another. But this is well implied within the original “*esse distinctos*”. The definition is actually an attempt to articulate the dynamic reciprocity between the subsistence-subsistence relation and the subsistence-essence relation. It is to be noted that the choice of the adjective “*incommunicabilis*”, as well as the mention of “*nota discretionis*”, was engendered by Calvin’s reply to the anti-trinitarians, who rejected the Nicene notion of consubstantiality and proposed to restrict the divine aseity to the Father as His distinguishing mark from the Son and the Spirit.²¹ This touched the very nerve of Calvin’s trinitarian teaching:

Indeed, they [the anti-trinitarians] do not refrain from this dreadful manner of speaking: the Father is distinguished from the Son and the Spirit by this mark, that he is the only “*essentiator*” [*patrem hac nota distingui a filio et spiritu, quia sit solus essentiator*]. ... But how will the Creator, who gives being to all, not have being from himself [*non erit ex se ipso*], but borrow his essence from elsewhere? For whoever says that the Son is an “*essentiatus*” from the Father denies that he is from himself [*Nam quisquis essentiatum a patre filium esse dicit, a se ipso negat esse*]. ... Now if we concede that all essence is in the Father alone, either it will become divisible or be taken away from the Son. And thus deprived of his essence, he will be God in name only [*titularis solum erit Deus*]. ... Conversely, there must be some mark of differentiation [*notam aliquam discretionis*] in order that the Father may not be the Son. Those who locate that mark in the essence clearly annihilate Christ’s true deity [*Qui in essentia eam ponunt, manifeste in*

²¹ Torrance suggests that Calvin was following Richard of St. Victor’s concept of incommunicable subsistence, which was adopted by Duns Scotus and John Major (Torrance (1990) 172). This is in line with his hypothesis that Calvin was influenced by Duns Scotus through John Major. Even if this is true, this influence appears pretty late, in fact, not until the 1559 edition of the *Institutes*. Therefore, we still have to ask what triggers Calvin to retrieve this weapon from his armoury. Both the dating and the verbal connection between I, 13, 6 and I, 13, 23 strongly suggest that the choice of “*incommunicabilis*” is a reaction against the anti-trinitarian threat.

nihilum redigunt veram Christi deitatem], which without essence, indeed the whole essence, cannot exist.²²

For Calvin, the restriction of divine aseity to the Father will unavoidably call Christ's true divinity into question. Therefore, whatever the *nota discretionis* between the Father and the Son is, it cannot lie in the realm of essence. The force of "incommunicabilis" is not so much to probe more deeply into what exactly the *proprietas* is for each, as to mark off what should be *commune* to all:

Certainly the Father would not differ from the Son unless he had in himself something unique [*proprium aliquid*], which was not shared with the Son [*filio commune non sit*]. Now what can they find to distinguish him? If the distinction is in the essence, let them answer whether or not he has shared it with the Son [*cum filio eam communicaverit*]. ... It remains that the essence is wholly and perfectly common to Father and Son [*tota et in solidum*²³ *patris et filii sit communis*]. If this is true, then there is indeed with respect to the essence no differentiation of one from the other [*quoad ipsam nulla erit alterius ab altero discretio*].²⁴

Therefore, the "proprietas incommunicabilis" or "nota discretionis" is not only to safeguard subsistence as irreducible over against one another, but also indirectly to

²² *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 23 (CO 2:109-110). We keep the technical terms "essentiator" and "essentiatus" untranslated, because Calvin is here refuting the anti-trinitarian notion of "essentiatio".

²³ Regarding the phrase "in solidum", Torrance writes, "Calvin has another telling way of expressing the nature of this Unity of the One Godhead in which, or in whom, a Trinity of Persons coexist in communion with one another, when he borrows the unusual expression *in solidum* from Cyprian." Torrance (1990) 191. However, the phrase "in solidum" is actually not so unusual in the 1559 *Institutes*. Out of its eighteen instances in that edition, there are only two related to the trinitarian teaching and only three directly related to Cyprian's writing. The rest can be rendered simply as "entirely" or "entirely in the sense of being exclusive". We choose to follow the plain meaning of the phrase, rather than to read in the patristic connotation.

²⁴ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 23 (CO 2:110-111). We change the translation of *discretio* from "distinction" to "differentiation". Bearing in mind the fact that behind Calvin's "incommunicabilis" there lurks what is "communicabile", we can understand better his concern, when he turns from his own definition to comment on Tertullian's: "Nor am I displeased with Tertullian's definition, provided it be taken in the right sense, that there is a kind of disposition or economy in God which *changes nothing at all concerning the unity of essence* [*esse quendam in Deo dispositionem vel oeconomian quae de essentiae unitate nihil mutat*]." *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 6 (CO 2:94); italics mine.

affirm the unity of essence and thus extend aseity to all persons. Boundary is then set for the concept of person, so that it can remain distinct, though not divided, from that of the essence. In fact, Calvin saw the *nota discretionis* among persons is also the *nota discretionis* between person and essence as a whole:

When immediately after he [John] adds that the Word was also God himself, he recalls us to the one and only essence [*ad unicam essentiam nos revocat*]. But because he could not be with God without residing in the Father, hence emerges the idea of a subsistence, which, even though it has been joined with the essence by an indivisible bond [*individuo nexu cum essentia coniuncta est*] and cannot be separated from it, yet has a special mark, by which it differs from it [*specialem tamen habet notam qua ab ipsa differat*].²⁵

In short, the choice of the adjective “incommunicabilis” underlines Calvin’s sensitive concern to formulate a notion of distinction which is intrinsically harmonised with divine unity (or simply a notion of distinction-in-unity), so as to secure Christ’s aseity intact. This intention is further implemented by the second qualifier, that is, the phrase “ad alios relata”. Regarding it, Calvin explains:

This “relation” [*Relatio*] is here distinctly expressed: because where simple and indefinite mention is made of God [*simplex fit Dei mentio et indefinita*], this name pertains no less to the Son and the Spirit than to the Father. But as soon as the Father is compared with the Son [*pater cum filio confertur*], their own property distinguishes each one from the other [*sua quemque proprietas ab altero discernit*].²⁶

²⁵ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 6 (*CO* 2:94). We change the English translation of “unicam essentiam” from “the essence as a unity” to “the one and only essence”, “individuo” from “common” to “indivisible”, “qua ab ipsa differat” from “whereby it is distinguished from it” to “with which it differs from it”.

²⁶ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 6 (*CO* 2:94). For the sake of consistency, we change the English translation of “sua proprietas” from “the character” to “their own property”.

Like “*proprietas incommunicabilis*”, this expression was also crystallised from Calvin’s reply to the anti-trinitarians. The issue here is: to what extent can the name “God” be ascribed to the Son and the Spirit? Behind this naming issue stands also the crucial question as to whether the Son and the Spirit are in the strictest sense the one true God. Calvin tried to argue that when the name “God” is mentioned *simpliciter* or *indefinite*, it is as unreservedly applied to the Son and the Spirit as to the Father. But when the “relation” among persons enters the picture, a peculiar naming convention will occur:

Therefore, whenever the name of God is mentioned indefinitely [*indefinite*], there are designated no less the Son and the Spirit than the Father; but where the Son is joined to the Father, then the relation comes to the centre [*in medium venit relatio*]; and so we distinguish among the persons. But because the properties in the persons carry an order within them [*proprietaes in personis ordinem secum ferunt*], e.g., in the Father is the beginning and the source [*principium et origo*], so often as mention is made of the Father and the Son together, or the Spirit, the name of God is peculiarly applied to the Father [*nomen Dei peculiariter patri tribuitur*]. In this way, the unity of essence is retained, and the account of order is considered [*Hoc modo retinetur unitas essentiae et habetur ratio ordinis*], which yet takes nothing away from the deity of the Son and the Spirit.²⁷

The last sentence informs us that the whole solution of this naming problem proposed by Calvin is also an intricate balance between divine unity and divine distinction, or simply a formulation of distinction-in-unity. In order to understand its function in Calvin’s thought, we have to examine the complicated relation among the key concepts “*principium*”, “*relatio*” and “*ordo*”.

²⁷ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 20 (CO 2:106).

III. Divine distinction and doctrine of order

When Calvin first employed this notion of *relatio*, it was not addressed to the abovementioned naming problem. Instead, it was directly concerned about the orthodoxy of his teaching: is his notion of aseity violating the patristic teaching that the Father is the beginning (*principium*) of the Son and the Spirit? How can it be reconciled with another expression of origination that the Son and the Spirit are “from” the Father? This problem had already been raised by Caroli in the 1537 Lausanne Colloquy, and obviously Calvin’s answer at that time could not silence all his critics. If there is any possible solution, the first step must be to contain the problem within the realm of divine person. And this was exactly what Calvin did in his 1539 *Institutes*:

For in each hypostasis the whole divine nature is understood, with this qualification – that to each belongs his own property [*sua ... proprietas*]. ... And ecclesiastical writers do not concede that the one is separated from the other by any difference of essence [*ulla essentia differentia seiungi alterum ab altero*]. In this sense the opinions of the ancients are to be harmonized, which otherwise would seem somewhat to clash. Sometimes, indeed, they teach that the Father is the beginning of the Son [*patrem filii principium esse*]; sometimes they declare that the Son has both divinity and essence from himself [*filium a se ipso et divinitatem et essentiam habere*].²⁸

Therefore, whatever the orthodox writers teach by saying the Father as the *principium* of the Son, they do not mean that the Father is the *principium* of His divinity and essence, otherwise there will be a differentiation between them with respect to essence. From 1543 to 1545, Caroli’s doubt upon Calvin’s aseity was continued by Jean Chaponneau and Jean Courtois. It compelled Calvin to collect more patristic support for

²⁸ *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (CO 1:491), also *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 19 (CO 2:105-6).

his teaching. From Augustine, Calvin found a very powerful weapon, the notion of *relatio*:

But he [Jean Courtois] will bring up that the Son is from the Father [*filium esse a patre*]. Who denies? Indeed, I willingly not only always have confessed, but also have preached it. Certainly it is this, in which those fools are mistaken: because they do not consider that the name “Son” is called regarding person and thus is held in the declaration of relation [*nomen filii dici de persona ideoque in praedicamento relationis contineri*], this relation does not have position when it is concerned simply regarding the divinity of Christ [*quae relatio locum non habet ubi de Christi divinitate simpliciter agitur*]. Augustine discusses this point elegantly in Psalm 68, ... The words are: If any one asks, is the Father the same as the Son? You answer, He is the same according to substance, [He is] not [the same] according to what He is called with reference to another [*secundum substantiam idem esse, non secundum quod ad aliud dicitur*]. Indeed He is called God with reference to Himself [*Ad se enim deus dicitur*], He is called the Son with reference to the Father [*ad patrem filius dicitur*].²⁹

Therefore, when we speak simply of the Son without regard to the Father [*de filio sine patris respectu simpliciter loquimur*], we well and properly declare him to be of himself [*ipsum a se esse asserimus*]; and for this reason we call him the sole beginning [*unicum vocamus principium*]. But when we mark the relation that he has with the Father [*relationem, quae illi cum patre est, notamus*], we rightly make the Father the beginning of the Son [*patrem filii principium merito facimus*].³⁰

The Augustinian authority was invoked to justify two different senses of “principium” in patristic thought. With respect to His essence “simpliciter” or “indefinite”, Christ has his being from Himself (*a se ipso esse*), and therefore has no *principium* but is Himself the sole *principium* of all. But, with respect to “relatio ad alios”, the Father is the *principium* of the Son. The adverb “simpliciter” or “indefinite” marks the realm of essence, as the adjective “incommunicabilis” marks that of divine

²⁹ Epistle 474 (1543) (CO 11:560).

³⁰ *Inst.* (1543) c. 6 (CO 1:491). Explicit appeal to Augustine in this matter was first added to the *Institutes* in the 1543 edition, the same year as the Epistle 474.

person. Also, this notion of relation brings in a hermeneutical consideration: when Christ or other divine persons are mentioned in the Scripture, interpreters should carefully discern whether they are made “simpliciter ad se” and therefore point to the unity of essence, or “relative ad alios” and therefore to their personal distinction. This principle gained a new significance, when Calvin’s anti-trinitarian rivals proclaimed that the name “God” is properly restricted to the Father alone whenever it appears in the Scripture.³¹ But before Calvin actually applied it to this problem, the Augustinian *relatio* was first welded with another important conception, i.e. the notion of order.

In its first appearance, the term “ordo” carried a strong polemical overtone against modalism. In the 1536 *Institutes*, it appeared as a parallel to the term “distinction”, where Calvin criticised Sabellius for confusing the Three with other divine essential attributes such as “powerful”, “just” or “wise”. His error was thought to be the same as that shown in an old song, “that the Father is the Son, and the Holy Spirit the Father, without order, without distinction [*nullo ordine, nulla distinctione*].”³² In the 1539 edition, Calvin offered a more detailed reflection on this “ordo” of distinction:

Nevertheless, it is not fitting to suppress the distinction that we observe to be expressed in Scripture. It is this: to the Father is attributed the beginning of activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things [*principium agendi*,

³¹ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 23 (CO 2:109): “For certain rascals ... added the provision that the Father, who is truly and properly the sole God, in forming the Son and the Spirit, infused into them his own deity. ... First they allege the specious argument that Christ is commonly called the Son of God and infer from this that no other than the Father is, properly speaking, God.” As shown before, this is the issue behind the new qualifier “ad alios relata” in the definition of persona introduced in this definitive edition. See also *Epistola qua fidem admonitionis apud Polonos confirmat* (1563) (CO 9:646).

³² *Inst.* (1536) 48 (CO 1:61-2). For consistency, from here on we will translate “ordo” and its synonym “gradus” as “order” and “rank” respectively.

rerumque omnium fons et scaturigo]; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition of all things [*sapientia, consilium, ipsaque in rebus agendis dispensatio*]; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity [*virtus et efficacia ... actionis*]. Indeed, although the eternity of the Father is also the eternity of the Son and the Spirit, since God could never exist apart from his wisdom and power, and we must not seek in eternity a before or an after [*in aeternitate autem non est quaerendum prius aut posterius*], nevertheless the observance of an order [*ordinis observatio*] is not meaningless or superfluous, when the Father is thought of as first, then from him the Son, and finally from both the Spirit [*primus recensetur pater, deinde ex eo filius, postea ex utroque spiritus*]. For the mind of each human being is naturally inclined to contemplate God first [*primo Deum consideret*], then the wisdom coming forth from him [*deinde emergentem ex eo sapientiam*], and lastly the power whereby he executes the decrees of his plan [*postremo virtutem, qua consilii sui decreta exsequitur*]. For this reason, the Son is said to come forth from the Father alone; the Spirit, from the Father together with the Son [*a patre duntaxat existere dicitur filius, a patre simul et filio, spiritus*].³³

The length and depth of this exposition is quite incommensurate with the complexity of the issue involved. Calvin here seemed to correlate the notion of order with the traditional problem of the Son's generation from the Father and of the Spirit's procession from both. But what does the all important keyword "existere" mean ontologically? Or is it simply another way of expressing "recensetur" and "consideratur"? Does it signify the same thing when it is applied to the Son and to the Spirit respectively?³⁴ The last question had once led Augustine painstakingly to work out the so-called double procession of the Spirit. On the contrary, Calvin showed little concern about these questions. When he addressed the problem that the Spirit is said to come forth from the Father together with the Son (i.e. the so-called problem of

³³ *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (*CO* 1:490); also *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 18 (*CO* 2:105). We change the translation of "simul et" from "and ... at the same time" to "together with".

³⁴ Both Augustine and Gregory of Nazianzen admit this thorny question and cautiously differentiate them to avoid implying that the Spirit is another son or even a grandson of the Father, though it seems that they do not think they have already arrived at a conclusive answer.

Filioque), he bypassed the preposition “ex” or “ab” in the statement and grounded his whole argument by appealing to the scriptural testimony in Rom. 8:9 that the Spirit is clearly revealed as the Spirit of both God and Christ.³⁵ This hesitation from inquiring too far into the ontological detail ironically left his exposition of *ordo* open to a modalistic reading, which Calvin wanted to avoid by the very term.³⁶ Nevertheless, this notion of order still has two imports. First, it allows that there is some sort of “first-then-finally” (*primus ... deinde ... postea*) in the realm of divine person, while no “before-after” (*prius aut posterius*) is introduced in the realm of essence. Therefore, when compared with the Son and the Spirit, the Father can in some sense be called “primus” or “principium agendi”. This *principium agendi* of the Father is quickly identified with *principium filii*. As Calvin differentiated the divine persons of the one God from His manifold works,³⁷ he owed his readers, strictly speaking, a justification of the leap from this *principium agendi* to that *principium filii* elicited from the Augustinian *relatio*.³⁸ But the affinity in language enabled the notion of *ordo* to be

³⁵ In Calvin’s thought, the problem of procession is overshadowed by this “simple” confession. Even facing passages regarding the Spirit’s procession in the fourth gospel, Calvin only draws our attention to the distinction of the Spirit from the Father and from the Son respectively (*Institutes* (1559) I, 13, 17; *CO* 2:105). Though Calvin does not deviate from the conclusion of the Western *Filioque*, he does not commit himself to its ratiocination.

³⁶ As a result, it is not entirely impossible to construe his so-called order of distinction as our conceptual differentiation of the one divine act, although this is quite unlikely his intention, seeing that the word “ordo”, as we have seen, carries a strong polemic overtone against Sabellianism. As in the case of “proprietas”, here we have another example of Calvin’s laxity in language, which may expose him to the suspicion of modalism.

³⁷ “While we employ this distinction of names, we do not imagine three gods, just as if the Father were something other than the Word, nor again do we understand the epithets to be empty, with which God is designated differently by His own works, but together with ecclesiastic writers we realise these in the utterly simple unity of God to be three hypostases, that is subsistence, which, though they consist in the one essence, are not however confused with each other.” *Confessio de Trinitate* (1537) (*COR* III 2:146).

³⁸ This analysis of divine activity does not imply that there is a division or a departmentalisation of works among divine persons. For Calvin, the whole creation is no less the Son’s work than the Father’s, as our justification is no less the Spirit’s work than the Son’s. Without giving an explicit account, Calvin

readily merged with the Augustinian notion without raising much awkwardness. Secondly, although “Wise”, “Just” or “Powerful” are God’s essential attributes and therefore indiscriminately applicable to all persons,³⁹ the order of distinction allows certain essential terms to have special, though not exclusive, association with certain divine persons. For instance, the second person is specially called “God’s Wisdom”, while the third “God’s Power”. This peculiar practice, later called the doctrine of appropriation, brings forth the inverse side of the hermeneutical consideration raised by the notion of *relatio*: when divine essential terms are mentioned in the Scripture, interpreters should carefully discern whether they are ascribed *indefinite* to all persons with respect to essence, or they are ascribed *relative* or *peculiariter* to a certain person with respect to order. This provided the theological ground to solve the naming problem raised by the anti-trinitarians. Their confusion resulted from their ignorance of the hermeneutical rule set by *relatio* or *ordo*:

From many passages one can readily refute as false their assumption that any unqualified reference to God in Scripture applies to the Father alone. In the very passages that they cite on their own side they shamelessly disclose their thoughtlessness, for the name of the Son is in these set beside that of the Father. From this it appears that the name of God is understood in a relative sense, and is therefore to be restricted to the person of the Father [*Unde apparet relative accipi Dei nomen, ideoque restringi ad patris personam*].⁴⁰

Calvin found that the Scripture poses a far more profound picture in reference to God than that conceived by the anti-trinitarians. Even the simple name “God” cannot

vaguely and intuitively upholds the principle that what God revealed Himself to be in His *opera ad extra* is what He is eternally.

³⁹ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 4 (CO 2:92) & 16 (CO 2:104).

⁴⁰ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 24 (CO 2:111).

but lead us to contemplate the deep mystery of the holy Trinity, the intricate correlation between divine unity and divine distinction:

If there were not any distinction, he [John] would not speak thus [i.e. The Word was with God]. For it would be speaking improperly to say, “God was with Himself”. So we know that this Word has some distinction from the Heavenly Father. ... Now he adds “The Word was God” to express still better what he wished to indicate, that Jesus Christ is not a created thing who had a beginning, but He is our true God. This passage has been poorly understood by some. Someone has foolishly translated it, saying, “God is the Word”. For if we said that God was the Word, the Father would no longer be God and the Holy Spirit would no longer be God. But St. John wished on the contrary to say that the Word is God, as if he said that Jesus Christ is, with respect to His Deity, of one same essence with the Father. Thus he does not exclude the Father from the Deity, but he shows that there is only one essence in God.⁴¹

Short as the first verse of the Johannine Prologue is, it contains two different uses of the name “God”. The first instance is employed to manifest the distinction within the one God. It is there to signify the Father in contrast with the Word. The apostle chooses to use the essential name “God” rather than the personal name “Father”, so that the unity of God will not be lost in view even when the distinction is expressed. With the next instance, the divine unity then comes to the foreground without calling the real distinction of the Three into question. The name “God” now does not stand for the Father alone, but the full divinity that the Three in general and the Word in particular share unreservedly. In short, while the anti-trinitarians claimed that the name “God” is exclusively proper to the Father, Calvin defended the position that it is only especially proper to the Father with respect to relation or order. The whole point of this peculiar arrangement is to point us back to the unity of essence:

⁴¹ Sermon on John 1:1-5 regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ (CO 47:474). See also *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 6 (CO 2:94).

Yet they do not observe that, even though the name “God” is also common to the Son, it is sometimes applied to the Father *par excellence* [κατ’ ἐξοχήν] because he is the fountainhead and beginning of deity – and this is done to denote the simple unity of essence [*quia fons est ac principium deitatis; idque ut notetur simplex essentiae unitas*].⁴²

Yet elsewhere he [Augustine] clears himself of this calumny, where he calls the Father the beginning of all deity because he is from no one [*patrem vocat principium totius deitatis, quia a nullo est*]; and wisely considers that the name of God is especially ascribed to the Father, for unless the start takes place from Him, the simple unity of God cannot be conceived [*specialiter patri adscribi Dei nomen, quod nisi ab ipso fiat initium, concipi nequeat simplex Dei unitas*].⁴³

Calvin followed Augustine to call the Father *fons ac principium totius deitatis*. However, strictly speaking, it cannot mean anything more than *principium trinitatis in una hac deitate*. His language here is precariously imprecise for his own theological intention. As we have seen, Calvin resolutely denied that the Father is the Son’s *principium essentiae et divinitatis* since the 1539 *Institutes*, and he did not jettison this position throughout his life. On the contrary, with his keenness on speculation which Calvin consciously avoided, Augustine could write, “And let him who can understand, in that which the Son says, ‘As the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself’, not that the Father gave life to the Son already existing without life, but that He so begat Him apart from time, that the life which the Father gave to the Son by begetting Him is co-eternal with the life of the Father who gave it.”⁴⁴ Thus, in

⁴² *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 23 (CO 2:109).

⁴³ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 29 (CO 2:116). We change the translation of “initium” from “beginning” to “start”, in order to distinguish it from “principium”.

⁴⁴ *De Trinitate* XV 47. ET from *On the Holy Trinity*. In St. Augustine vol. III. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Ed. P. Schaff. Trans. A. W. Haddan (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 225.

some well-qualified manner, Augustine is comfortable to say that the life or essence of the Son is from the Father through eternal begetting. This kind of expression is quite unlikely uttered from Calvin's lips. For Calvin, the Father is called the beginning of the whole Godhead or simply God, just because His "not-from-ness" at the level of subsistence corresponds most prominently with the "not-from-ness" (i.e. aseity) of the whole Godhead at the level of essence, and thus stands out as a representative among divine persons to point us back to the aseity and unity of essence:

Yet we teach from the Scriptures that God is one in essence, and hence that the essence both of the Son and of the Spirit is unoriginate [*unum essentialiter Deum esse, ideoque essentiam tam filii quam spiritus esse ingenitam*]; but inasmuch as the Father is first in order, and from himself begot his wisdom, [*Sed quatenus pater ordine primus est, atque ex se genuit suam sapientiam*] as has just been said, he is rightly deemed the beginning and fountainhead of the whole of divinity [*principium et fons totius divinitatis*]. Thus God is indefinitely unoriginate; and the Father also in respect to his person is unoriginate [*Ita Deus indefinite est ingenitus, et pater etiam personae respectu ingenitus*].⁴⁵

As in the case of the adjective "incommunicabilis", "ordo" or "relatio" of distinction also results from Calvin's life-long commitment to his conviction towards divine aseity. Consolidated through the threat of heresy, his notion of divine person, while formally affirming the irreducible nature from the very outset, has been built in a strong inclination towards unity. This has already been seen in the analogical relation between the person of the Father and the whole Godhead. But this dynamic relation between divine unity and divine distinction is even more clearly reflected in the person of the Holy Spirit, to which we are now turning.

⁴⁵ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 25 (CO 2:112-3). We change the translation of "ingenitus" from "unbegotten" to "unoriginate".

IV. Holy Spirit as bond: the distinction of distinction-in-unity

The doctrine of order, as well as the accompanying practice of appropriation, indicates that the two objective realities of the divine life, i.e. divine unity and divine distinction, are not sealed off from each other. In fact, Calvin discerned a constant movement between them, which he often recited a passage of Gregory Nazianzen to illustrate:

And that passage in Gregory of Nazianzus vastly delights me: “I cannot think on the one without quickly [*mox*] being encircled by the splendor of the three; nor can I discern the three without being straightway [*subito*] carried back to the one [*ad unum referar*].” Let us not, then, be led to imagine a trinity of persons that keeps our thoughts distracted and does not at once lead them back to that unity [*ad illam mox unitatem reducat*].⁴⁶

On the One-to-Three-ward side, Calvin unambiguously held that the one, true God can only be known as the One in the Three Persons. In other words, when Christian faith employs the word “essence” to signify the reality of divine unity, it does not entertain something behind or outside the reality of the Three Persons. This peculiar understanding in fact differentiates the Christian God from all other false notions of

⁴⁶ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 17 (*CO* 2:104). Also Sermon on John 1:1-5 concerning the divinity of Christ (*CO* 47:474): “But as I have said, the Three are only One, and yet we must distinguish Them, since there is a definite distinction, as is here shown. However, it reminds us of a sentence of an ancient teacher, which is well worthy to be remembered, because it is excellent. ‘I cannot,’ says he, ‘think upon these three properties [*ces trois proprieté*] which are shown me in God unless immediately [*incontinent*] my mind reduces them to one [*se reduise à un*]. On the other hand, it is impossible for me to know one only God unless I regard all the three properties, and I see them distinguished by my sense according to the clarity that is given me in Holy Scripture.’”

deity.⁴⁷ The realm of person is not something subordinate or posterior to the realm of essence. Against the charge of teaching a quaternity, Calvin clarified that person is not at all a derivation from a primal essence, because there is no other God or essence than that which is constituted of the three persons:

They [the anti-trinitarians] also foolishly think they may conclude from our statement that we have set up a quaternity, for they falsely and calumniously ascribe this fiction of their own brain to us, as if we pretended that three persons came forth by derivation from one essence [*derivative ... prodire ex una essentia tres personas*]. On the contrary, it is clear from our writings that we do not abstract the persons from the essence [*non abstrahere nos personas ab essentia*], but, though they remain within it [*in ipsa resideant*], we put in the distinction [*distinctionem interponere*]. If the persons had been separate from the essence [*Si separatae essent ab essentia personae*], the reasoning of these men might have been probable; but in this way there would have been a trinity of gods, not of persons whom the one God contains in himself [*hoc modo trinitas esset deorum, non personarum quas in se continet unus Deus*].⁴⁸

Turning the tables on his anti-trinitarian rivals, Calvin found that it was they who, by denying Christ's and the Spirit's aseity, were guilty of making Christ and the Spirit something abstracted from a primal essence and finally relapsing into pagan polytheism:

Indeed he [Gregory Paul, anonymously mentioned in the tract] briefly denies that he sets up three gods, but he cannot escape this absurdity as long as he

⁴⁷ "But God also designates himself by another special mark [*speciali nota*], by which he can be discerned more closely [*qua propius possit dignosci*]. For he so proclaims himself the sole God, as to offer himself to be contemplated distinctively in three persons [*ita se praedicat unicum esse, ut distincte in tribus personis considerandum proponat*]. Unless we grasp these, only the bare and empty name of God flits about in our brains, to the exclusion of the true God." *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 2 (*CO* 2:90). It should be noted that "*specialis nota*" is the synonym of "*proprietas incommunicabilis*" and that Calvin is here preparing to give his exposition on the definition of person. This *nota* not only constitutes the definition of person, but also draws the line of demarcation between true and false notions of God.

⁴⁸ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 25 (*CO* 2: 113). For clarity, we change the English translation of "*abstrahere*" from "separate" to "abstract". Similarly in *Impietas Valentini Gentilis detecta et palam traducta* (1561) (*CO* 9:365), Calvin writes, "He [Gentilis] says that we are mistaken, that we set up three persons in the one essence of God. Thus a quaternity is indeed devised, as if the term 'person' denoted something abstracted from the essence."

denies that Christ is one God with the Father [*negabit Christum esse unum cum patre Deum*]. For if He is not the same God, and yet is God, He therefore is another [God]. Let me speak more plainly. If the Father has His own special being from Himself [*pater suum esse habet a se ipso*], the Son has His own special being from the Father [*filius suum esse habet a patre*], the Spirit from both [*spiritus ab utroque*], do not three essences emerge? And thus is not the one torn into pieces? [*an non tres essentiae emergunt? atque ita una discernitur?*] And certainly if his argument is accepted, no other essence is left to Christ than some sort of abstracted thing [*non alia relinquitur Christo essentia, quam nescio quid abstractum*]: just as they scatter the essence of the Father in the beginning, so that what grants fecundity to all things is not barren to have brought forth the Son from itself.⁴⁹

As a result of the imminent threat of tritheism, Calvin obviously lays more emphasis on the Three-to-One-ward side of the bilateral movement. This leaning towards unity is motivated by his deep concern about simplicity of piety:

When they [believers] have known these three things, they will no longer go astray either this way or that way, but they will come to this sole essence – to know that there is only one God [*viendront à ceste seule essence: pour cognoistre qu'il n'y a qu'un seul Dieu*], even only one God who has so created the world that He has omitted nothing of all that was required to accomplish our redemption. ... Although there was a distinction of God

⁴⁹ *Brevis admonitio ad Fratres Polonos* (1563) (CO 9:636). It is to be noted that, for Calvin, *Filioque* alone cannot safeguard the unity of essence, without Christ's and the Spirit's aseity being asserted at the same time. Also, *Epistola qua fidem admonitionis apud Polonos confirmat* (1563) (CO 9:646-7): "If the Son is contrasted with the Father with respect to essence, compound deity will emerge from it, nothing is more absurd than that. And yet that treacherous apostate Gentilis is not ashamed to vomit this blasphemy, that Christ is an "essentiatus" from the Father [*Christum esse a patre essentiatum*], where you realise that the prodigious term was devised with devilish fiction. Finally just as Manichaeans formerly chattered that human soul derives its origin from the "tradux" of God, so this deceiver pretends that the Son of God is some sort of abstracted thing from the true deity [*Dei filium esse nescio quod abstractum a vera deitate*]. Yet if Christ is an "essentiatus", He is not Jehovah who formerly appeared to the prophets, that the apostles however testify. Indeed, by this they cannot escape from tearing the essence of God into pieces, unless they concede that Christ is essentially one God [*Hoc quidem effugere nequeunt, quin discernant essentiam Dei, nisi concedant Christum essentialiter unum esse Deum*]. Also another madness of them is exposed, because unless the Son is the same God with the Father, it is necessary that many gods are introduced [*nisi idem sit filius cum patre Deus, plures deos induci necesse est*]."; *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 23 (CO 2:110): "The essence of God, if these babblers are to be believed, belongs to the Father only, inasmuch as he alone is, and is the "essentiator" of the Son [*Essentia Dei ... soli patri convenit, quatenus ipse solus est, et est filii essentiator*]. Thus the divinity of the Son will be something abstracted from God's essence, or a part derived from the whole [*divinitas filii quiddam erit abstractum a Dei essentia, vel derivatio partis a toto*]."

from His Word, yet we must always come back to that simplicity, that They are one God whom we must adore [*il nous faut tousiours revenir à ceste simplicité-là, qu'ils sont un Dieu, lequel il nous faut adorer*].⁵⁰

One must not imagine that there were [three persons] as three men, but the word “Person” signifies a distinct property [*une propriété distincte*], such that when we speak of God, though He is one, yet there are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are not divided: because there is only one sole essence, one sole majesty, and one sole glory [*lesquels ne sont point divisez: car il n'y a qu'une seule essence, une seule maieste, et une seule gloire*]. ... Nevertheless we see how this distinction leads us to the unity, in order that we adore one sole God, and that we are fastened to Him [*ceste distinction nous meine à l'unité, afin que nous adorions un seul Dieu, et que nous soyons arrestez à luy*].⁵¹

Our whole life has only one anchoring point, and our eyes have only one goal. It is the one true God approaching us in Christ and guiding us in the Spirit. For Calvin, the mystery of divine revelation posits a sheer paradox before us: the distinction or incommunicability of person constantly points us back to the unity or communicability of essence. We have already seen how the doctrine of appropriation displays this paradox in the distinction of the Father. However, at the realm of person, this paradox gains its sharpest correspondence in the person of the Holy Spirit:

Our readers should note here that the Spirit is indiscriminately called sometimes the Spirit of God the Father, sometimes the Spirit of Christ [*promiscue Spiritum nunc Dei Patris, nunc Christi vocari*]. This is not only because His whole fullness was poured on Christ as our Mediator and Head, so that each one of us might receive from Him his own portion, but also because the same Spirit is common to the Father and the Son, who are of one essence, and the same eternal deity [*quoniam idem Spiritus Patris et Filii communis est, quorum una est essentia, et eadem aeterna Deitas*].⁵²

⁵⁰ Sermon on John 1:1-5 concerning the divinity of Christ (CO 47:474).

⁵¹ Sermon 47 on Matthew, Mark and Luke (CO 46:583).

⁵² Comm. on Rom. 8:9 (COR II 13:161) CCNT 164-5. We modify the English translation by giving a more literal translation of the Latin text, so that the parallel between the person of Holy Spirit and the full deity can be shown more clearly.

When we differentiate the distinct person of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, the Scripture paradoxically brings us back to the togetherness of the Father and the Son. In this way, the distinction of the third person is understood as a distinction-in-unity at the realm of divine person.⁵³ Furthermore, it also crosses over the boundary between person and essence, moving us to contemplate in the togetherness of the Father and the Son their unity in essence:

Further, such distinction does not impede the utterly simple unity of God [*simplicissimam Dei unitatem*], as we may prove from it that the Son is one God with the Father, because He is together with Him in the one Spirit [*unum esse cum Patre Deum, quia uno simul cum eo Spiritu constet*]; and that the Spirit is not something different from the Father and the Son, because He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son [*Spiritus autem non aliud esse a Patre et Filio diversum quia Patris et Filii sit Spiritus*].⁵⁴

This correlation between the Spirit's distinction and the unity of essence is so firm that Calvin can invoke it to refute the anti-trinitarian's restricting divine aseity to the Father:

⁵³ Krusche draws our attention to the paradox displayed in the person of the Holy Spirit (Krusche 7). However, he quickly identifies the Spirit's incommunicable property with His order of distinction (i.e. *procedere ab utroque*). Calvin is not so clear in his expression. He sometimes says that the property carries an order, and sometimes vaguely uses them as synonyms. If Krusche agrees that the concept of property is not simply equated with that of person, we should not so rashly identify property with order either. As we find that Calvin's exposition of order is not thorough enough, we cannot expect the co-ordination of property and order to be so complete.

⁵⁴ *Confessio de Trinitate* (1537) (COR III 2:148). This text is incorporated into the 1539 *Institutes* and retained in all subsequent editions, see CO 1:490-1 and *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 19 (CO 2:105). With reference to Calvin's explanation of the word "spirit" in I, 13, 20, Torrance suggests that the word "spirit" of the quoted text in I, 13, 19 stands for the spiritual essence of God, rather than the third person of the Trinity (Torrance (1990) 177). This interpretation cannot stand with the original context in the 1537 *Confessio*. In order to show how the unity of essence is harmonised with the distinction of subsistence, Calvin neatly puts statements regarding the essential relation on the left while those regarding personal relation on the right.

Now they [the anti-trinitarians] are compelled from their own presupposition to concede that the Spirit is of the Father alone [*spiritum esse solius patris*], because if he is a derivation from the primal essence, which is proper only to the Father, he will not rightly be considered the Spirit of the Son [*quia si derivatio est a prima essentia, quae non nisi patri propria est, iure non censebitur spiritus filii*]. Yet this is disproved by Paul's testimony, where he makes the Spirit common to Christ and the Father [*communem Christo et patri facit*].⁵⁵

In sum, there is an analogy between subsistence-subsistence and subsistence-essence relations in the person of the Spirit: that *eadem essentia tota et in solidum Patris et Filii communis est* is intricately linked up with that *idem Spiritus Patris et Filii communis est*. The distinction of the Spirit, in His incommunicable property, paradoxically points us to His communicability between the Father and the Son, and finally leads us to their communicability (or unity) of essence. As the Father stands out as a representative of the divine aseity of the whole Godhead, the Spirit, in some sense, stands out as a representative of the divine communion of the same Godhead.

This understanding is pretty close to Augustine's calling the Spirit the consubstantial communion between the Father and the Son.⁵⁶ But there are marked differences between them. First, Calvin did not explicitly call the Spirit the gift, love or bond

⁵⁵ *Inst.* (159) I, 13, 23 (CO 2:110). Also, *Inst.* (1536) 45 (CO 1:59): "If there is indeed one Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the Father and the Son must be one. Again, it is appropriate that the Spirit Himself is one with the Father and the Son, as no one is different from His own Spirit. [Si enim unus est patris et filii spiritus, pater et filius unum sint oportet. Rursum, spiritum ipsum unum esse cum patre et filio convenit, cum nullus a spiritu suo diversus sit]."

⁵⁶ *De Trinitate* V 12; XV 27, 29, 37, 50; Schaff 93, 215, 216, 219-20, 227. Augustine also observes that the special name of the third person is paradoxically not special at all. For both the Father and the Son are commonly "holy", and both are commonly "spirit" in nature. With his keenness on speculation, he goes so far as to suggest that the name "Holy Spirit" indeed is not to inform us of the reciprocal relation between the two and the third, but remind us of their communion (*De Trinitate* V 12; Schaff 93). See also J. Ratzinger, "The Holy Spirit as Communio: Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality in Augustine," *Communio* 25 (1998) 324-339; S. H. Lancaster, "Divine Relations of the Trinity: Augustine's Answer to Arianism," *Calvin Theological Journal* 34 (1999) 327-346.

between the Father and the Son within the Trinity. The closest expression of similar idea is that Christ is said to be conjoined with the Father in the same Spirit.⁵⁷ Throughout his exposition, he deviates from Augustine in one important point. He did not share Augustine's speculative interest in speaking too much about the eternal procession of the Spirit in the immanent Trinity. The eternal distinction among persons was an impenetrable "given" to him. And that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son was also taken as a direct revelation, which is shown most clearly of all in Rom. 8:9. Unlike Augustine, Calvin was not so fascinated by the Father's and Christ's respective sending of the Spirit recorded in the fourth gospel, that he found himself obliged to explain how the Spirit proceeds *principaliter* from the Father, and yet also from the Son through His being begotten from the Father.⁵⁸ Calvin only appealed to those Johannine passages as a proof that the Spirit is another person from the Father and the Son. His treatment of the pneumatological theme is very much in line with his minimalist attitude towards the doctrine of Trinity at large. It can be regarded as an attempt of re-engineering the same essential insight for faith by grounding it upon a more proven exegetical base, while bypassing the unnecessary speculation for

⁵⁷ "Ac sciendum est spiritum Christi dici, non modo quatenus aeternus sermo Dei est eodem spiritu cum patre coniunctus, sed secundum mediatoris quoque personam." *Inst.* (1559) III, 1, 2 (CO 2:395). Here the same correspondence between subsistence-subsistence and subsistence-essence relations can be discerned: "... hinc emergit illa subsistentia, quae etsi individuo nexu cum essentia coniuncta est, nec potest separari, specialem tamen habet notam qua ab ipsa differat." *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 6 (CO 2:94). If subsistence is said to be conjoined with the essence by an "indivisible bond", then, *mutatis mutandis*, it should be quite acceptable for Calvin to call the Spirit as the "indivisible bond" between the Father and the Son. However, Calvin does not make such an explicit statement.

⁵⁸ Calvin comes closest to this issue, when he discusses the doctrine of order. However, his application of order and appropriation is so restrained, that it is quite unlikely to deduce his view from it. His acknowledgement of the Spirit's being *ex utroque* does not compel him to discuss whether or in what sense the Son is also the "principium" of the Spirit.

curiosity.⁵⁹ Secondly, as we have seen, distinction-in-unity is a characteristic embedded within the concept of person in general. It is then shared indiscriminately by all divine persons, just as aseity is also shared indiscriminately by all divine persons. The Holy Spirit stands out in this respect only because His personal distinction corresponds most prominently with this common characteristic of distinction-in-unity. After all, the subsistence-essence relation should be the same for all persons in all respects, otherwise the equality among divine persons may be called into question at some point.⁶⁰ Here Calvin's minimalism in theologisation is also at work. While the Scripture does confront us with the existence of such an analogy between subsistence-subsistence and subsistence-essence relations, Calvin does not find it necessary to inquire more deeply into what ontological presupposition should then be maintained, so that this peculiar Christian piety towards the Spirit can be upheld properly. In this respect, Augustine chose to "sin boldly", while Calvin chose to be silent in adoration. For Calvin, the Spirit's being the bond for us (i.e. our union with God) is far more "practical" than His being the bond in God Himself. The immanent Trinity only serves as a dark background for the eye-catching economic Trinity. And only in this context can Calvin see the real significance of the problem of *Filioque*, to which we now turn.

⁵⁹ After analysing Calvin's attitude towards patristic exegesis in his Commentary on John, Steinmetz rightly observes that "Calvin's commitment to patristic teaching did not involve for him a commitment to what he regarded as bad exegesis". He then concludes, "It is not true, as Hunnius suggested, that Calvin confessed that the Son is consubstantial and coeternal with the Father, while undermining the exegesis that had always supported that claim. It is more accurate to see Calvin attempting to provide the best possible exegetical foundation for the dogmatic claims of the Church." D. C. Steinmetz, "The Judaizing Calvin," in *Die Patristik in der Bibelexegese des 16. Jahrhunderts*, ed. D. C. Steinmetz (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999) 135-145, at 144-5.

⁶⁰ Krusche wrongly confines the uniting function to the person of the Spirit ("Der Einende ist der Heilige Geist") by seeking support from Calvin's own words: "ceste distinction nous mene à l'unité" (Krusche 7; CO 46:583). In fact, the context requires that "ceste distinction" should refer to divine person in general and the person of the Father (not the Spirit!) in particular. If Calvin does not allow the Father to be the originating one of the Godhead, it seems quite unlikely for him to accept the Spirit as the uniting one.

V. Doctrine of order, *extra Calvinisticum* and *Filioque*

We have already seen how the doctrine of order can balance divine unity and distinction in an intricate manner. Its significance is that it allows a certain essential term (in Calvin's case, the name "God" in particular) to be specially ascribed to one divine person, without diminishing its validity to the other two. In this way, it provides a bridge between unity and distinction. Terms for unity can be so formulated to convey the idea of distinction, which can in turn lead us back to unity. For the sake of clarity, our discussion so far is confined within the doctrine of the Trinity. However, Calvin is prepared to extend its application to the realm of Christology. When the eternal Word took up flesh to be our Mediator, the doctrine of order attained a new significance:

Nor, indeed, is it absurd for him who not only has begotten his own wisdom from himself but is also the God of the Mediator, as I shall treat more fully in its proper place, to be specially called God on account of rank and order [*propter gradum et ordinem Deum peculiariter vocari qui non solum genuit ex se suam sapientiam, sed Deus etiam est mediatoris*]. For from the time that Christ was manifested in the flesh, he has been called the Son of God, not only in that he was the eternal Word begotten before all ages from the Father, but because he took upon himself the person and office of the Mediator, that he might join us to God [*Nam ex quo manifestatus est in carne Christus, filius Dei vocatur, non tantum quatenus ante saecula genitus ex patre fuit aeternus sermo, sed quia mediatoris suscepit personam et munus, ut Deo nos coniungeret*].⁶¹

⁶¹ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 24 (CO 2:111). For clarity, both here and afterward, we will translate "gradus" and "ordo" as "rank" and "order" respectively. Similar idea is also found in *Impietas Valentini Gentilis detecta et palam traducta* (1561) (CO 9:370): "Further, in order that this worthless person [Gentilis] would not do deceit to the inexperienced, readers are to be warned that when Christ is called the Son of God, it has regard not so much to the person of the Son, which has been before the creation of the world, as to that of the Mediator [ubi filius Dei vocatur Christus, non tam ad filii personam, quae fuit ante mundi creationem, quam mediatoris hoc spectare]. Moreover when Christ the Mediator is offered to us, because

“Ordo”, together with its synonym “gradus”, is again invoked to explain the fact that the Father is specially called “God”. However, the intention is quite different. The epithet “Son of God” is now referring not so much to the divine person, who was begotten from the Father before all ages, as to the person of the Mediator, who was manifested in flesh in the fullness of time. Calvin clearly distinguishes these two uses of the concept “persona”. In the former case, emphasis is laid on the equality with the Father; while, in the latter, emphasis is shifted to the inferiority to the Father:

They object that Christ, if he be properly God, is wrongly called Son. To this I have replied that when a comparison of one person is made with another, the name of God is not to be taken indefinitely, but restricted to the Father, seeing that he is the beginning of deity, not in the bestowing of essence, as fanatics babble, but by reason of order [*quatenus deitatis est principium, non essentiando ... sed ratione ordinis*]. In this sense [*Hoc sensu*] is to be understood that saying of Christ to the Father, “This is eternal life, that they believe thee to be the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” [John 17:3 p.]. For speaking in the person of the Mediator [*in mediatoris persona loquens*], he holds a middle rank between God and man [*medium gradum tenet inter Deum et homines*]; yet his majesty is not on this account diminished [*neque tamen ideo imminuitur eius maiestas*].⁶²

Compared with this *medius* or *inferior gradus* of the Mediator, the Father therefore stands out as a representative of the most high God. Strictly speaking, there is a subtle

He cannot be intermediary, unless He is inferior to God, the whole glory of deity is given to the Father [Ubi autem nobis offertur mediator Christus, quia medius esse non potest, nisi Deo sit inferior, patri integra datur deitatis gloria]. Nor is it surprising, because He willingly descends to us, in order to raise us up on high to God [quia sponte ad nos descendit, ut sursum nos ad Deum attolleret]. ... Christ is the Son of God, insofar as He is the Word of God begotten from the Father before ages, who was finally manifested in flesh. In the eternal Word, personal distinction is noted to such an extent, that he will thus be the Son of God relatively, and at the same time God without relation. Insofar as He indeed puts on the form of servant, He is the Son of God, in order that He obeys the Father, and His condition is thus new and different from earlier [nova sit eius conditio, et a priore diversa].”

⁶² *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 26 (CO 2:113).

change in tone, when the doctrine of order is applied to the context of Christology. The situation is inverted and it is now actually the personal name “Father” which is specially ascribed to God:

The fact that Paul, in the beginning of his letters, first puts God the Father, then adds Christ is based on the same reason, for he establishes the divinity in the word Father and then he introduces the Mediator who raises us up to God [*quia deitatem statuit in patris nomine, deinde mediatorem interponit, qui nos ad Deum erigat*]. ... Hence, it follows that we must seek the God in whose essence three persons are included, and when Christ enters the picture God is truly and properly called the Father of Jesus Christ because it is then that Christ has his rank of Mediator to raise us to God and thus to himself [*ubi in medium prodit Christus, Deum vere et proprie vocari patrem Iesu Christi, quia tunc mediatoris gradum obtinet Christus, ut nos ad Deum attollat, et ita ad se ipsum*]. As for the words, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father” (John 20:17), they confirm and declare in a clearer way what I have just said about Christ speaking in the person of the Mediator as descending in a certain way below God in order to be nearer to us [*ubi Christus loquitur in mediatoris persona, quodammodo descendere infra Deum, ut nobis sit propior*]. But this does not prevent him from being our true God.⁶³

The *superior gradus* of the eternal God (represented by the Father) and the *inferior gradus* of the incarnate Mediator open up a movement of *descendere-attollere*. The element of “leading us to unity” in the doctrine of order is merged with our union with God realised in the office of the Mediator. Or, technically speaking, the trinitarian doctrine of order here intersects with the christological doctrine of *extra Calvinisticum*. The doctrine of order enables the person of the Father to stand out as a representative for the divine majesty, which is shared equally with the pre-existent person of the Son. This underived majesty is the sole source of our highest goodness, but yet is too threateningly

⁶³ *Responsum ad quaestiones Georgii Blandratae* (1558) (CO 9:327-8). English translation is modified from J. N. Tylenda, “The Warning That Went Unheeded: John Calvin on Giorgio Biandrata,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 12 (1977) 57.

brilliant and high for us. Therefore, in order to accommodate our weakness, the incarnate Son does not make an immediate claim on this common majesty, but ascribes the whole glory to the Father:

For even though he emptied himself [Phil. 2:7], he lost not his glory with the Father which was hidden to the world. ... Therefore we must hold that, as often as Christ in this person of Mediator addresses God, under this name of God is included the deity which is also Christ's [*quoties Christus in persona mediatoris patrem compellat, sub hoc Dei nomine divinitatem complecti, quae ipsius quoque est*]. Thus when he said to the apostles, "It is expedient that I go up to the Father" [John 16:7; cf. ch. 20:17] "because the Father is greater than I" [ch. 14:28, Vg.], he does not attribute to himself merely a secondary deity so that he is inferior to the Father with respect to eternal essence [*non secundam divinitatem tantum sibi tribuit ut sit quoad aeternam essentiam patre inferior*]; but because endowed with heavenly glory he gathers believers into its participation [*sed quia coelesti gloria potitus, fideles colligit in eius participationem*]. He places the Father in the higher rank [*In superiore gradu patrem locat*], seeing that the bright perfection of splendor that appears in heaven differs from that measure of glory which was seen in him when he was clothed with flesh [*qua tenus differt conspicua splendoris perfectio, quae in coelo apparet, ab ea gloriae mensura quae conspecta fuit in ipso carne vestito*]. With the same intent, Paul elsewhere says that Christ "shall deliver up the Kingdom to the God and Father" [1 Corinthians 15:24], "that God may be all in all" [1 Corinthians 15:28]. Nothing is more absurd than to deny that Christ's deity is everlasting. But if he will never cease to be the Son of God, but will ever remain the same as he was from the beginning, it follows that there is comprehended under the name of "Father" the unique essence of God which is common to both [*Quod si nunquam desinet esse Dei Filius, sed idem manebit semper qui fuit ab initio, sequitur, sub patris nomine unicam Dei essentiam, quae utriusque communis est, comprehendere*]. And certainly for this reason Christ descended to us, that by raising us up to the Father he might also at the same time raise us up to himself, inasmuch as he is one with the Father [*Et certe ideo ad nos descendit Christus ut ad Patrem attollendo, simul etiam ad se ipsum attolleret, quatenus unum est cum Patre*].⁶⁴

The Son thus descends (*descendere*) to a lower rank, so that he can lift us up (*attollere*) on high to the Father, i.e. the one God, to whom He Himself also belongs.

⁶⁴ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 26 (CO 2:113-4).

This descent through incarnation does not actually imply any lessening in the Son's majesty, otherwise He were unable to finish His commission. It only means that the Word, who is still no less the eternal God than the Father by remaining wholly outside the flesh, meets us in a more familiar way by clothing Himself wholly in the flesh (that is, the so-called *extra Calvinisticum*). The contemplation from distinction to unity of the divine life then coincides with the elevation from veiled to unveiled glory in the divine salvation. For Calvin, this understanding of Christ's identity with the one true God, as well as His merciful accommodation, is of utmost importance. This practical knowledge outweighs all other speculation on God. Although Calvin mentioned in passing that the Father has begotten the Son before all ages, it functions more or less as a confirmation that the Son is perpetually distinct from the Father and is God in the fullest sense. The word "begetting" does not invite us to speculate some eternal act of the Father, but points to the manifestation of this heavenly glory, to which our faith is raised:

When God says, *I have begotten thee*, it ought to be understood as referring to men's understanding or knowledge of it; for David was begotten by God when the choice of him to be king was clearly manifested. The words *this day*, therefore, denote the time of this manifestation; for as soon as it became known that he was made king by divine appointment, he came forth as one who had been lately begotten of God, since so great an honour could not belong to a private person. The same explanation is to be given of the words as applied to Christ. He is not said to be begotten in any other sense than as the Father bore testimony to him as being his own Son [*Eadem in Christo quoque relatio tenenda est, non enim genitus dicitur nisi quatenus Pater Filium suum esse testatus est*]. This passage, I am aware, has been explained by many as referring to the eternal generation of Christ; and from the words *this day*, they have reasoned ingeniously as if it denoted an eternal act without any relation to time [*ac si perpetuum actum extra tempus notaret*]. But Paul, who is a more faithful and a better qualified interpreter of this prophecy, in Acts 13:33, calls our attention to the manifestation of the heavenly glory of Christ [*coelestis Christi gloriae demonstrationem*] of which I have spoken. This expression, *to be begotten*, does not therefore imply that he then began to be the Son of God, but that his being so was then made manifest to the world.

Finally, this begetting ought not to be understood of the mutual respect of the Father and the Son; it only signifies that He, who had been hidden from the beginning in the sacred bosom of the Father, and who afterwards had been obscurely shadowed forth under the law, from whom He came forth with evident marks, was known to be the Son of God [*haec genitura non de mutuo Patris et Filii respectu intelligi debet: sed tantum significat, eum qui fuerat ab initio absconditus in arcano Patris sinu, et obscure deinde sub lege adumbratus, ex quo prodiit cum claris insignibus, cognitum fuisse Dei filium*], according to what is said in John 1:14, “we have seen his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father.”⁶⁵

Calvin was convinced that the Scripture does not mean to disclose some “private matter” about God, but only informs us what is crucial to our salvation.⁶⁶ For the Son’s being begotten, what is beneficial to our life lies in its confirming to us Christ’s heavenly glory, rather than the “mechanism” of begetting as such. However, this clear manifestation of the Son’s “being begotten” is not open to all people, for only a few, indeed the elect of God, can glimpse this heavenly glory through the power of the Holy Spirit:

And we beheld his glory [as of the only-begotten]. For though the glory of Christ could have been seen by all, it was unknown to the most because of their blindness; only a few, whose eyes the Holy Spirit had opened, saw this manifestation of glory. The gist of it is that Christ was recognized as a man

⁶⁵ Comm. on Ps. 2:7 (CO 31:46-7). English translation is modified from *Commentaries on the Book of Psalms* Vol. 1, Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. 4, J. Anderson (trans.) originally for the Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999) 17-8. Also *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 29 (CO 2:116): “For what is the point in disputing whether the Father always begets? Indeed, it is foolish to imagine a continuous act of begetting, since it is clear that three persons have subsisted in God from eternity.”

⁶⁶ After the profound disclosure of the unity and distinction between God and the Word in John 1:1, Calvin finds that the apostle immediately draws our attention back to something related to our piety: “Having declared that the Word is God and proclaimed His divine essence, he goes on to prove His divinity from His works. And it is in this practical knowledge that we ought especially to be trained. For the mere attribution of the name of God to Christ will leave us cold unless our faith feels Him to be such indeed.” Comm. on John 1:3 (CO 47:4) CCNT 9-10. Same conclusion is arrived when the apostle adds “full of grace” after mentioning Christ’s being “the only-begotten” in John 1:14: “The majesty of Christ certainly appeared also in other respects, but the Evangelist chose this example instead of others to train us in the practical rather than the speculative knowledge of Him – a fact to be carefully observed.” Comm. on John 1:14 (CO 47:15) CCNT 21.

who showed in Himself something far greater and more sublime. Hence it follows that the majesty of God was not annihilated although it was enfolded within flesh. It was indeed hidden under the lowliness of the flesh, yet so that it still sent forth its glory [*Dei maiestatem non fuisse exinanitam, quamvis carne circumdata esset: latuit quidem sub carnis humilitate, sed ita tamen ut fulgorem suum emitteret*].⁶⁷

Therefore, the manifestation of the Son's heavenly glory is closely accompanied with the manifestation of the Spirit's heavenly glory:

When He says that *he will send him from the Father* and again that *he proceedeth from the Father* [*se a patre missurum et rursus a patre procedere*], He does so to increase the weight of His authority [*ad augendum autoritatis pondus*]. For, unless we were convinced that He had proceeded from God [*persuasi essemus a Deo profectum esse*], the testimony of the Spirit would not be sufficient against attacks so powerful and stratagems so many and fierce. Hence, it is Christ who sends the Spirit, but from the heavenly glory; that we may know that He is not a human gift but a sure pledge of divine grace [*Christus ergo est qui spiritum mittit, sed ex coelesti gloria, ut sciamus non humanum esse donum, sed certum divinae gratiae pignus*].⁶⁸

Similar to the Son's "being begotten from the Father", the Spirit's "proceeding from the Father" does not invite us to speculate on some eternal act of the Father, but functions more or less as a confirmation that the Spirit is perpetually distinct from the Father and is God in the fullest sense. It points us to the manifestation of this heavenly authority, with which our faith is fortified. Evidently, *Filioque* is well implied within this understanding of "a patre procedere". However, Calvin does not bother himself to ponder the ontological questions framed by the traditional discussion of *Filioque*. In his thought, the significance of *Filioque* is more functional in orientation, and is controlled by the christological concern of *extra Calvinisticum*. As the Son clothed Himself in

⁶⁷ Comm. on John 1:14 (CO 47:15) CCNT 21.

⁶⁸ Comm. on John 15:26 (CO 47:354) CCNT 110.

flesh to come closer to us, so the Spirit was sent to our midst to fortify us. But as the Mediator in His intermediary rank did not and ought not lose His heavenly glory, so the “another Comforter” sent from (or, that is the same, the pledge corresponding to) this lower rank could not suffer His heavenly glory to be doubted, otherwise His commission would become futile. The Son in His lower rank ascribed all the divine glory especially to the Father, so that His own heavenly glory can be paradoxically set forth. Likewise, He ascribed the sending of the Spirit from this lower rank especially to the Father, so that the Spirit’s own heavenly authority can also be paradoxically set forth:

Even though the divinity in the Holy Spirit is the same as in the Father, nevertheless, we do not say that Christ intercedes with the Spirit, but only with the Father. In this matter we must consider the economy of divine counsel and not give free rein to our speculations. Christ, for this reason, is said to send the Spirit from His Father (John 16:7) to raise us, by degrees, up to the Father [*Hac ratione dicitur Christus spiritum missurus a patre suo, ut per gradus ad patrem nos attollat*].⁶⁹

The *extra Calvinisticum* enables us to say at the same time that Christ lifts us up to the Father according to His office of the Mediator, and also that He lifts us up to Himself according to the divinity shared with the Father. By the same token, in the matter of the Spirit’s procession, we can say at the same time that Christ sends the Spirit from the Father according to His mediatorial office, and also that He sends the Spirit by Himself according to His eternal divinity:

Furthermore, reference to obtaining it of the Father is to be applied to the person of the Mediator. It can truly be said either that Christ sent the Spirit from Himself, or that He was sent from the Father; from Himself, because He

⁶⁹ *Responsum ad fratres Polonos* (1560) (CO 9:341); ET from J. N. Tylenda, “Christ the Mediator: Calvin Versus Stancaro,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1973) 16.

is eternal God; from the Father, because, inasmuch as He is man, He received from the Father what He gives to us. ... And surely, since it is the office of Christ to direct us to the Father, this form of words is most suitable for godly use, whereby Christ, set as it were between God and ourselves, delivers to us with His own hands the gifts which He has received from the hands of the Father.⁷⁰

In short, Calvin's treatment of the so-called *Filioque* problem follows closely with the christological doctrine of *extra Calvinisticum*.⁷¹ Both are carefully articulated to preserve the crucial element of *attollere*. If the *Filioque* controversy leads us astray from this practical knowledge which is critical to our own eternal life, it will turn out to be an idle subtlety, about which Calvin is not prepared to linger.⁷²

We have seen that in Calvin's trinitarian teachings the divine person is carefully formulated to safeguard Christ's and the Spirit's aseity. In this way, the persons of Christ and the Holy Spirit share indiscriminately with the Father the uncreated power,

⁷⁰ Comm. on Acts 2:33 (CO 48:47) CCNT 74. Also, Comm. on John 14:16 (CO 47:329) CCNT 82: "Here He calls the Spirit 'the gift of the Father' – but a gift which He will obtain by His prayers. Elsewhere He promises that He Himself will give the Spirit. Both statements are true and appropriate, for inasmuch as Christ is our Mediator and Intercessor, He obtains from the Father the grace of the Spirit; but inasmuch as He is God, He bestows that grace from Himself."

⁷¹ In analysing the relation between the *extra Calvinisticum* and the *Filioque* in Calvin's thought, Krusche comments, "das sog. Extra-Calvinisticum ist nicht lediglich eine Konsequenz aus dem Prinzip: finitum non capax infiniti, ... sondern es ist pneumatologisch gefordert." Krusche 128. The pneumatological principle is: "Es ist ein von Calvin immer wieder eingeschränktes Axiom, daß Christus nicht von seinem Geist zu trennen sei" or simply "das transeunt zu verstehende filioque" Krusche 127. We can agree with him in the first half that the *extra Calvinisticum* is not the consequence of the principle: finitum non capax infiniti, but not in the second half. It is not true that the *extra Calvinisticum* is demanded pneumatologically, but that the *Filioque* is demanded christologically (i.e. by *extra Calvinisticum*).

⁷² "From this it is clear how idle was the subtlety of the Greeks when, on the basis of these words, they denied that the Spirit proceeds from the Son. For Christ, according to His custom, names the Father here, to raise our eyes to the contemplation of His divinity." Comm. on John 15:26 (CO 47:354) CCNT 110. Here Calvin clearly had the *Filioque* controversy in mind. However, he showed little interest in discussing the arguments of the Latin Church or the counter arguments of the Greek Church. That the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son was for him beyond all dispute. What remains is only the question as to why the procession is usually specially (though not exclusively) ascribed to the Father in the Scripture.

glory and majesty. Also, there is a constant movement from the divine distinction to the divine unity in essence and majesty, which is corresponded most prominently in the person of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the Father and the Son. We have also mentioned briefly that there is a second use of *persona* in Calvin's christological teachings, which refers to the *inferior gradus* of the Mediator. According to the *extra Calvinisticum*, these two uses are held in tension throughout the whole economy of salvation, and the second use always lifts us up to the first use, unveiling to us its uncreated majesty. In Calvin's thought, the *Filioque* of the Holy Spirit basically points to the same unveiling process. In the next two chapters, we will examine more closely the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Calvin's second use of *persona*.

Chapter 4

Extra Calvinisticum and *Persona* in the Christological Context

In the previous chapter, we have seen briefly that the *extra Calvinisticum* results in two uses of *persona* in Calvin's thought. These two uses of *persona* open up a movement of *descendere-attollere*. In this chapter, we will examine in greater detail the second sense of Calvin's *persona*, i.e. his concept of person in the christological context. We will explore how Calvin transposed the conventional problem of two natures to an office-christology. In this way, Calvin repudiated any realistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum*. Therefore, a corresponding office-pneumatology is demanded to handle the influence of the divinity on the humanity within the person of Mediator.

I. The Manner of Salvation and the Eternal Decree of God

Before we proceed to examine Calvin's understanding of *persona* in the christological context, note should be given to the soteriological concern behind his handling of the problem of two natures at large. Right from the first edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin adopted the soteriological axiom that for the sake of our salvation the Redeemer must be truly God and truly man at the same time. For him, the completeness of Christ's divinity as well as his humanity is of vital significance for our faith:

Those who despoil Christ of either his divinity or his humanity either blaspheme God's majesty or obscure his goodness. But they just as much weaken and overthrow our faith, which cannot stand except on this foundation.¹

¹ *Inst.* (1536) 51-2 (CO 1:66).

Here Calvin spelt out two basic elements of his soteriology, namely divine majesty and divine goodness. The completeness of divinity safeguards that the Redeemer really shares the one, undiminished majesty and power of the eternal God. This is necessary because a mere man or an angel cannot overcome the obstruction interposed by sin between God and us. Only Righteousness and Life, that is God himself, can have the power to overcome the destruction of sin and death. However, since our humanity is weak and prone to all kinds of sin, we cannot reach God by our own strength, but get lost in the labyrinth and create so many idols for ourselves. It would have been utterly hopeless for us if the very majesty of God had not descended to us. Thus, the full humanity of the Redeemer comes into play, in that God, out of His mercy, accommodated Himself to our weakness and reached us in our flesh, so that He can lift us up to Himself and resolve us to obey Him. “Otherwise, the nearness would not have been near enough, nor the affinity sufficiently firm, for us to hope that God might dwell with us.”² Further, since it was Adam who disobeyed and sinned against God, the Redeemer should take up our humanity, standing in our place to pay the penalty of sin and satisfy God’s justice.³ This penal substitution called for a genuine humanity, “since neither as God alone could he feel death, nor as man alone could he overcome it, he coupled human nature with divine that to atone for sin he might submit the weakness of the one to death; and that, wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, he might win victory for

² *Inst.* II, 14, 1 (CO 2:353). Also II, 13, 1-4 (CO 2:347-52).

³ For the significance of true divinity and of true humanity in Calvin’s theology, see also W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956) 110-9; and Willis 67-99.

us.”⁴ In short, the weakness, suffering, death and final victory of the Mediator in His human flesh are the very means which God ordained to accommodate Himself so as to manifest His mercy towards us. With this pledge, we can trust God’s good pleasure towards us. Our hope in this miserable life therefore hinges on the fact that Christ’s humanity is just the same as ours.

Strictly speaking, with this exposition of the two natures, Calvin did not mean to prove a philosophical necessity underlying the question of *Cur Deus Homo*, but to illustrate the adopted axiom in the light of the scriptural testimony. Probably as a consequence of his response to Laelius Socinus in 1555, Calvin himself had explicitly admitted in his 1559 *Institutes* that there is no abstract reason or higher principle, which ultimately determines the mode of salvation:

If someone asks why this [i.e. that our Mediator be both true God and true man] is necessary, there has been no simple (to use the common expression) or absolute necessity [*De necessitate si quaeritur, non simplex quidem (ut vulgo loquuntur) vel absoluta fuit*]. Rather, it has stemmed from a heavenly decree, on which men’s salvation depended [*sed manavit ex coelesti decreto, unde pendebat hominum salus*]. Our most merciful Father decreed [*statuit*] what was best for us.⁵

Although Calvin distastefully rejected as perverse curiosity the conjecture of some late medieval theologians that it could have been equally possible for the Son of God to have taken upon Himself some other nature than human,⁶ he basically admitted that the manner of salvation was determined solely by God’s eternal decree. This sentiment was

⁴ *Inst.* II, 12, 3 (CO 2:342).

⁵ *Inst.* (1559) II, 12, 1 (CO 2:340).

⁶ *Inst.* (1559) II, 12, 5 (CO 2:344)

even more clearly articulated in his exposition of the relation between God's merciful decree and Christ's obedience in His flesh, which no doubt originated from his response to Laelius Socinus:

Indeed, I admit, if anyone would simply set Christ by himself over against God's judgment, there will be no place for merit. For no worthiness will be found in man to deserve God's favor. ... In discussing Christ's merit, we do not consider the beginning of merit to be in him, but we go back to God's ordinance, the first cause. For God solely of his own good pleasure appointed a Mediator to obtain salvation for us [*Quum ergo de Christi merito agitur, non statuitur in eo principium; sed conscendimus ad Dei ordinationem, quae prima causa est: quia mero beneplacito mediatorem statuit, qui nobis salutem acquireret*]. ... Apart from God's good pleasure Christ could not merit anything; but did so because he had been appointed [*destinatus erat*]⁷ to appease God's wrath with his sacrifice, and to blot out our transgressions with his obedience. To sum up: inasmuch as Christ's merit depends upon God's grace alone, which has ordained this manner of salvation for us [*quando ex sola Dei gratia (quae hunc nobis constituit salutis modum) dependet meritum Christi*],⁸ it is just as properly opposed to all human righteousness as God's grace is.⁹

In other words, the Mediator's assuming the true humanity, together with His atoning act in it, was an obedient execution of the eternal decree of His appointment, and only thus derived its currency from it. Theologically speaking, this eternal decree of appointment controls Calvin's whole christological discussion. For Calvin, any

⁷ "ordinatus est" in the 1555 *Responsio ad aliquot Laelii Socini senenesis quaestiones* (CO 10a:160).

⁸ In the 1555 *Responsio*, "misericordia" takes the place of "gratia" (CO 10a:160).

⁹ *Inst.* (1559) II, 17, 1 (CO 2:386-7). Also, in II, 17, 2: "We see how God's love holds first place, as the highest cause or origin; how faith in Christ follows this as the second and proximate cause." And Comm. on Eph. 1:5 (CO 51:148) CCNT 126: "The efficient cause is the good pleasure of the will of God; the material cause is Christ; and the final cause is the praise of His grace. ... To the first belongs this whole context: God has predestinated us in Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, unto adoption, and has made us accepted by His grace." And Comm. on John 3:16 (CO 47:64) CCNT 73: "And Christ's word mean nothing different when He says the cause [of our salvation] lies in the love of God. For if we want to go any higher the Spirit prevents us with Paul's declaration that this love was founded on 'the good pleasure of his will'." By using either *dilectio* or *misericordia*, Calvin means to refer us to God's eternal will of election and no further.

subsequent inquiry into the ontological constitution of the Mediator should be regulated within the proper limit of witnessing the relevance of Christ's appointed office for us. This can be seen in his application of the Chalcedonian definition, to which we are now turning.

II. One Person out of Two Natures: Calvin's nuance in applying Chalcedon

i. Completeness and distinctiveness of two natures

Calvin's attitude towards the relation of the two natures can be well summarised in the following words:

On the other hand, we ought not to understand the statement that "the Word was made flesh" [John 1:14] in the sense that the Word was turned into flesh or confusedly mingled with flesh. Rather, it means that, because he chose for himself the virgin's womb as a temple in which to dwell, he who was the Son of God became the Son of man – not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person [*non confusione substantiae, sed unitate personae*]. For we affirm his divinity so joined and united with his humanity that each retains its distinctive nature unimpaired, and yet these two natures constitute one Christ [*ut sua utrique naturae solida proprietates maneat, et tamen ex duabus illis unus Christus constituatur*].¹⁰

No doubt, Calvin followed closely the Chalcedonian phraseology, upholding its "without confusion", "without change" and "the unity of person". In principle, he rejected both Nestorianism and Eutychianism. However, in practice, he found the latter a more imminent threat in his own time. Above all, the most "dangerous" Eutychian

¹⁰ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 1 (CO 2:353).

Calvin observed was Michael Servetus, for whom he devoted a substantial passage to refuting his error in the 1559 *Institutes*.¹¹

According to Calvin, Servetus asserted that the Son of God is actually some kind of intermediate being between God and man. Before incarnation, the Son was only an idea in God's eternal counsel, who came into existence only at the moment of conception. Also, his flesh was of no human origin but celestial.¹² In Calvin's mind, such teaching strips the Redeemer both of his divinity and of his humanity:

His [Servetus'] subtlety takes this direction: having overturned the distinction of the two natures, he regards Christ to be a mixture of some divine and some human elements, but not to be reckoned both God and man.¹³

while he cannot conceive of Christ as the Son of God unless his flesh came forth from God's essence, and was converted into deity, he reduces to nothing the eternal hypostasis of the Word, and he snatches from us the Son of David, who had been promised as our Redeemer.¹⁴

Calvin's anxiety about Eutychianism was later deepened through his controversy with the Lutherans regarding the Lord's Supper. In order to explain how the natural body of Christ can be present locally in the sacrament, the Lutherans introduced a notion of the ubiquity of Christ's body. According to this theory, Christ's divinity and humanity are intimately united to such an extent that the properties of the former are ontologically

¹¹ In Chapter 14 of Book II, right after stating his formal objection to both Nestorianism and Eutychianism, Calvin started to refute the error of Servetus. More than half passage of the whole Chapter 14 was spent to do this refutation.

¹² *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 5-8 (CO 2:356-61).

¹³ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 5 (CO 2:356).

¹⁴ *Inst.* II, 14, 8 (CO 2:358).

communicated to the latter.¹⁵ In case of the Lord's Supper, omnipresence of the divinity is so communicated to the humanity that the natural body of Christ can be locally present in the sacrament. Calvin saw the error of Servetus and Eutyches behind this eucharistic teaching:

But some are carried away with such contentiousness as to say that because of the natures joined in Christ, wherever Christ's divinity is, there also is his flesh, which cannot be separated from it. As if that union had compounded from two natures some sort of intermediate being [*medium nescio quid*] which was neither God nor man! So, indeed, did Eutyches teach, and Servetus after him. But from Scripture we plainly infer that the one person of Christ so consists of two natures that each nevertheless retains unimpaired its own distinctive character [*sic unicam Christi personam constare ex duabus naturis, ut cuique tamen sua maneat salva proprietas*]. And they will be ashamed to deny that Eutyches was rightly condemned. It is a wonder they do not heed the cause of his condemnation; removing the distinction between the natures and urging the unity of the person, he made man out of God and God out of man.¹⁶

In order to safeguard the distinctiveness of both natures, especially that of the humanity, Calvin can even allow the two natures to operate in an almost separate manner, stretching the Chalcedonian "without confusion" and "without change" to its very limit. This accent was especially prominent when Calvin tried to assert the genuineness of Christ's bodily weakness. For instance, when commenting on Christ's sleep on the boat in Matt. 8:23, Calvin writes,

I do not say, as many do, that Christ pretended to sleep, in order to test them. I really think he slept, as the state and needs of His human nature affected Him. But all the time His Godhead was on the watch, so that His disciples should not have been afraid for themselves, without immediately finding comfort in the knowledge that assistance from heaven was at hand.¹⁷

¹⁵ This is a realistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum*. We will shortly see Calvin's restriction on its use.

¹⁶ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 17, 30 (CO 2:1031).

¹⁷ Comm. on Matt. 8:23 (CO 45:264) CCNT 280.

Also, in order to square with Jesus' own saying that He did not know the day of the last judgement in Matt.24:36, Calvin explains,

We know that the two natures in Christ were so conformed in one Person that each retained what was proper to it: in particular the Divinity was silent [*quievit*] and made no assertion of itself whenever it was the business of the human nature to act alone [*seorsum*] in its own terms in fulfilment of the office of Mediator.¹⁸

Hence, although the two natures should remain unimpaired, the activity or exertion of the nature (the divine in particular) could enter into a hidden condition, when the Mediator was executing His appointed duty. While adhering to the general principle laid down in Chalcedon, Calvin was much more prepared to join with Leo the Great in stating that "the activity of each form is what is proper to it in communion with the other: that is, the Word performs what belongs to the Word, and the flesh accomplishes what belongs to the flesh",¹⁹ than to share Cyril's worry about splitting the one person of Christ in so speaking.²⁰ In Calvin's mind, the apparent tension arising from those difficult biblical

¹⁸ Comm. on Matt. 24:36 (CO 45:672) CCNT 99.

¹⁹ "Agit enim utraque forma cum alterius communione quod proprium est, verbo scilicet operante quod verbi est, et carne exequente quod carnis est" from Tome of Leo the Great, ET from N. P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* Vol. 1 (Eng. Translation) (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990) 79. Witte rightly discerns Calvin's emphasis upon the distinction between God and man when he says "Grundlage für Calvins Christologie ist der absolute Wesensunterschied zwischen Gott und Mensch, die unendliche Entfernung zwischen Gott und dem Geschöpf, besonders dem sündigen Geschöpf. Dieses Distanz-Bewußtsein findet seinen christologischen Ausdruck besonders in dem antiochenischen Element des Unvermischt-Seins der zwei Naturen und im leonischen 'salva proprietate utriusque naturae'." J. L. Witte, "Die Christologie Calvins," in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 3, A. Grillmeier & H. Bacht (eds) (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1954) 524. For the Latin tradition in Chalcedon, see also J. Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, *The Christian Tradition* Vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971) 256-260; and R. V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon* (London: S.P.C.K., 1953) 182-203.

²⁰ Cyril's fourth anathema in his third letter to Nestorius reads, "If anyone distributes between the two persons or hypostases the expressions used either in the gospels or in the apostolic writings, whether they are used by the holy writers of Christ or by him about himself, and ascribes some to him as to a man,

texts can be easily relieved in an edifying manner, provided that a line of demarcation is carefully drawn between the person of the Mediator and the two underlying natures. This brings us to his exposition on the unity of person of the Mediator.

ii. Unity of person of the Mediator

Calvin's objection to Nestorianism is more formal in nature than that to Eutychianism. For Calvin, the major error of Nestorius is to assert that "the Son of God so dwelt in the flesh that the same was not man also".²¹ In other words, the man being indwelt is not in the truest sense the Son of God himself, but another "separate" person. As a result, a notion of two persons or a double Christ is introduced in the place of the Mediator. In Calvin's mind, this error can be effectively avoided if one holds firmly that in the incarnate reality the two natures did not form two respective persons, but jointly constitute one person of Christ (i.e. the unity of incarnate person or the oneness of Christ). Here, he adopted the patristic analogy of a human person to illustrate this idea:

Yet he who consists of these parts [body and soul] is one man, not many. Such expressions signify both that there is one person in man composed of two elements joined together, and that there are two diverse underlying natures that make up this person. Thus, also the Scriptures speak of Christ.²²

thought of separately from the Word from God, and others, as befitting God, to him as to the Word from God the Father, let him be anathema." Tanner, 59.

²¹ "quia filium Dei fingeat ita habitasse in carne, ut non idem ille esset homo." *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 5 (*CO* 2:357). See also his Comm. on John 1:14 (*CO* 47:14), 2:19 (*CO* 47:47) and on Heb. 2:16 (*CO* 55:33-4).

²² *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 1 (*CO* 2:353).

Calvin categorised the scriptural witnesses to one Christ into four groups, namely (1) those applying exclusively to His divinity; (2) those applying exclusively to His humanity; (3) those applying neither to divinity alone nor to humanity alone, but to both at once; and (4) those regarded as “communication of properties”. The first two groups testify the completeness of the underlying natures, and the fourth group, which we will examine shortly, in Calvin’s thought is also used to defend their distinctiveness. In order to explore Calvin’s understanding of the unity of person, the third group is of special interest, because Calvin himself enlarged its discussion and added the comment that they “set forth his [the one incarnate person’s] true substance most clearly of all” in the 1539 *Institutes*.²³ For Calvin, these passages are not simply clearer expressions of the singularity of person in duality of natures, but they intimate a peculiar aspect of the divine economy:

For the Son of God had been endowed with such prerogatives [the power of remitting sins, of raising to life, of bestowing righteousness, etc.] when he was manifested in the flesh. Even though along with the Father he held them before the creation of the world, it had not been in the same manner or respect [*non tamen eodem modo vel respectu*], and they could not have been given to a man who was nothing but a man.²⁴

Here the scriptural passages confront us with a sheer paradox, in which the words, deeds and authority of Jesus exceed the proper limit of His full humanity, but yet fall short of those of His full, eternal divinity. Calvin found the expositions of those passages by the ancient writers so unsatisfactory that he thought they overlooked the whole point of the matter:

²³ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 3 (CO 2:354). This category was placed before that of *communicatio idiomatum* in the 1536 edition. It was enlarged and placed after the latter since the 1539 edition.

²⁴ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 3 (CO 2:355).

Here we cannot excuse the error of the ancient writers who pay no attention to the person of the Mediator [*ad mediatoris personam non attendunt*], obscure the real meaning of almost all the teaching one reads in the Gospel of John, and entangle themselves in many snares. Let this, then, be our key to right understanding: those things which apply to the office of the Mediator are not spoken simply either of the divine nature or of the human [*neque de natura divina, neque de humana simpliciter dici, quae ad mediatoris officium spectant*]. ... And the name “Lord” exclusively belongs to the person of Christ only in so far as it takes an intermediate rank between God and us [*Nec alio respectu peculiariter in Christi personam competit Domini nomen, nisi quatenus medium gradum statuit inter Deum et nos*].²⁵

For Calvin, those puzzling passages are meant to inform us of something about the realm of the mediatorial office, not that of the natures. A line of demarcation should be clearly drawn between the office or person of the Mediator and the two underlying natures. During the Lord’s Supper controversy with his Lutheran contemporaries, Calvin also adopted a scholastic distinction of *totus-totum* to express the same line of demarcation between the incarnate person and the natures:

they [Calvin’s Lutheran critics] object that the person of Christ is dissolved by us, because we deny that he can be in his human nature wheresoever he pleases. If this is to dissolve the person, it will be necessary to rob the human nature of every thing that is most proper to it, in order to his continuing to be Mediator. What can be imagined more absurd than that the flesh of Christ was in heaven while he hung upon the cross? Yet undoubtedly the whole Christ, God and man, was then also in heaven [*Quid autem absurdius fingi potest, quam in coelo fuisse Christi carnem dum in cruce pendeat? Neque tamen dubium est quin totus Christus deus et homo tunc quoque in coelo fuerit*]. But those proud censors must be taught a vulgar distinction which was not unknown either to Peter Lombard (Lib. 3. Sentent. dist. 22) or the sophists who came after him, viz, that Christ, the Mediator, God and man, is whole everywhere, but not wholly, because in respect of his flesh he continued some time on earth and now dwells in heaven [*Christus mediator deus et homo totus*

²⁵ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 3 (CO 2:355). For consistency, we change the translation of “medium gradum statuit” from “represents a degree midway” to “takes an intermediate rank”. From his commentaries on John and other biblical books, we know that Calvin was referring to those fathers who pondered the passages at the level of essence in order to refute the Arian error.

ubique est, sed non totum: quia carnis suae respectu in terra aliquamdiu versatus est, et nunc in coelis habitat].²⁶

To express this in a still more palpable form, I employed the trite phrase of the schools, that Christ is whole everywhere but not wholly [*Quod totus Christus sit ubique, sed non totum*]. In other words, being entire in the person of Mediator, he fills heaven and earth, though in his flesh he be in heaven, which he has chosen as the abode of his human nature, until he appear for judgment [*nempe quia integer in persona mediatoris coelum et terram impleat: licet carne sit in coelo, ubi humanae suae naturae domicilium elegit, donec in iudicium appareat*].²⁷

In other words, with respect to His person of Mediator (*totus*) Christ has been both on earth and also in heaven even during His passion or after His ascension, but with respect to the underlying natures (*totum*) He has not been everywhere for His human nature was circumscribed in a definite location. This is actually a restatement of the *extra Calvinisticum* in terms of the person of Mediator. As the divinity, while having descended in the flesh, still fills heaven and earth and also rules outside the flesh as before, this property is then allowed to be ascribed to the whole person of Mediator, but not to the human nature. Thus, the completeness and distinctiveness of the two underlying natures is safeguarded by shifting that which exceeds the proper limit of His humanity to the realm of person.²⁸

²⁶ *Ultima Admonitio ad Westphalum* (1557) (CO 9:194-195), T&T II 418. See also CO 9:223, T&T II 457; and CO 9:246, T&T II 488. In the 1559 *Institutes*, this *totus-totum* distinction is added right after the classic text of *extra Calvinisticum* in IV, 17,30 to explain how the divinity is said to have clothed in the flesh and yet still to fill the heaven and earth as before.

²⁷ *Dilucida explicatio sanae doctrinae de vera participatione carnis et sanguinis Christi in sacra coena ad discutiendas Heshusii nebulas* (1561) (CO 9:476), LCC XXII 275. See also CO 9:507, LCC XXII 311.

²⁸ *Sentences* III, d. 22 c.3 reads, “Ex his apparet quod Christus eodem tempore totus erat in sepulcro, totus in inferno, totus ubique; sicut et modo totus est ubicumque est, sed non totum. Nec in sepulcro vel in inferno totum erat, etsi totus: sicut Christus totus est Deus, totus homo, sed non totum, quia non solum est Deus vel homo, sed et Deus et homo. ‘Totum’ enim ad naturam refertur, ‘totus’ autem ad hypostasim; sicut ‘aliud’ et ‘aliquid’ ad naturam, ‘alius’ vero et ‘aliquis’ ad personam referuntur.” *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae* Tomus II, Spicilegium Bonaventurianum V (ed.) Ignatius Brady, O. F. M (Grottaferrata: Collegii S. Bonaventurae Ad Claras Aquas, 1981) 139.

It is to be noted that in the christological context Calvin used the term *persona* almost interchangeably with *officium*. Calvin did admit that Christ was placed somewhere between God and us, but a crucial qualification should be added immediately that He was taking up a *medius gradus*, rather than turning to Servetus' *medium quid*. The tension of the two natures is transposed to the problem of office. As the eternal God, the Son is always in the same essence, glory and power with the Father; but when He undertook the office of the Mediator, His glorious and majestic divinity, though remaining unimpaired, entered into a concealed condition so that He could put Himself lower than the Father.²⁹ In so doing, the Mediator holds out His brotherly hands towards us and elevates us *gradatim* back to the Father. In other words, the union of two natures or the formation of the incarnate person kicked off a dialectic of veiling and unveiling of the divine majesty. The question of two natures was converted to the question of two conditions of the office bearer, namely the present condition of humbleness and the future condition of glory. For instance, when commenting on Jesus' saying "for the Father is greater than I" in John 14:28, Calvin offered us an intriguing, non-essentialist reading:

This passage has been twisted in various ways. The Arians, to prove that Christ is some sort of inferior God, argued that He is less than the Father. To remove any excuse for such a calumny, the orthodox fathers said that this should be referred to His human nature. But although the Arians had wickedly abused this testimony, the solution of the fathers was neither correct nor applicable. For Christ is not speaking here either of His human nature or of His eternal divinity, but for the sake of our weakness interposes Himself between God and us. And indeed, as it is not given to us to reach the height of

²⁹ Chapters 15-17 in Book II of the *Institutes* are the detailed exposition of Christ's mediatorial office in bringing us back to God. For Christ's concealment of glory, see also his Comm. on Luke 2:40 (CO 45:103-4); Matt. 8:23 (CO 45:264); Matt. 24:36 (CO 45:672); Matt. 27:46 (CO 45:779-80); Phil. 2:6-11 (CO 52:24-30); Heb. 2:16 (CO 55:33-4).

God, Christ descended to us to raise us to it. ... To make the matter clearer, we must speak even more bluntly. Christ is not here drawing a comparison between the divinity of the Father and of Himself, nor between His own human nature and the divine essence of the Father, but rather between His present state and the heavenly glory to which He was shortly to be received [*Ut res clarius pateat, crassius adhuc loquendum est. Non confert hic Christus patris divinitatem cum sua, nec humanem suam naturam divinae patris essentiae comparat, sed potius statum praesentem coelesti gloriae, ad quam mox recipiendus erat*].³⁰

Calvin applied the same principle to interpret the passages regarding Christ's kenosis-exaltation in Phil. 2:6-11 and Christ's final submission-glorification in 1 Cor. 15:27-28. The kenosis does not mean any change or inferiority in Christ's divine nature, but simply indicates the concealment of glory in discharging his mediatorial office.³¹ Accordingly, the exaltation does not mean any addition to his divine nature, but "God exalted His Son

³⁰ Comm. on John 14:28 (CO 47:335-6) CCNT 89-90. See also Comm. on John 6:57 (CO 47:156), 10:30 (CO 47:250) and 17:21,24 (CO 47:387-90). It is striking that Calvin in these places deviated from the traditional teachings of the church fathers. His treatment of "the Father is greater than I" is openly different from that in Leo's Tome. Calvin tended to shift the interpretation of these scriptural expressions from the perspective of nature to that of office. Oberman's oft-cited statement "Calvin's shift of accent from a natures-Christology to an offices-Christology, converging towards a Mediator-theology" is fitting enough in this respect, H. A. Oberman, "The 'Extra' Dimension in the Theology of Calvin," *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*, vol. 8, *An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*, R. C. Gamble (ed.), 160-184 (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1992) at 179. However, in commenting on Calvin's application of *perichoresis*, Butin says "The most striking aspect of Calvin's use of this idea, due no doubt to the influence of the Johannine texts themselves, is his bold inclusion of believers in the perichoresis of the divine life through their participation in Christ by the Holy Spirit". He gains support for his argument by Calvin's comment on John 17:21 and thinks there is an "explicit emphasis on trinitarian perichoresis that draws believers into the divine life as members of Christ's body" P. W. Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 43 & 161 n. 38. Here, Butin may be misled by Calvin's terminology, for Calvin's oneness between the Father and Christ here is anything but an ontological oneness. Calvin explicitly refused to view the oneness in John 10:30 as regards *homoousios* in the divine life, and proposed that it only referred to the oneness in agreement between God and the Mediator. In 17:21, Calvin asserted that this unity in agreement should become the norm in the faith community. The Eastern notion of *perichoresis* in the ontological dimension is quite foreign to Calvin's interpretation of these Johannine passages.

³¹ "But here the question arises, whether this pertains to Christ's divinity or humanity. For either of the two is not without inconsistency, inasmuch as nothing new could be given to His divinity; and His humanity in itself, viewed separately, by no means possesses such exaltation that it should be adored as God. I answer, that this, like many other things, is affirmed of Christ's entire Person, as He was God manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). For He did not abase Himself either as to His humanity alone, or as to His divinity alone, but inasmuch as, clothed in our flesh, He hid under its infirmity." Comm. on Phil 2:10 (CO 52:29-30) CCNT 251-2. For Calvin's notion of kenosis, see also Willis 78-81; Witte 526-7.

in the same flesh in which he had lived in the world abject and obscure to the highest rank of honour, that he may sit at His right hand".³² So again, the two-natures problem is shifted to a two-states problem, namely a former state of veiling and a latter state of unveiling of divine majesty. The Christ in these passages is not a thing which is supposed to be pinned down and scrutinised to its minutest details, but is one who is on his move and whose movement, in fact elevating movement, is of tremendous soteriological significance. In this way, Calvin wanted us to stay with the plain testimony of the scriptures and diligently ponder the significance of Christ's words and works for us in the course of the salvation, rather than to speculate subtly the metaphysical questions of the incarnation.

iii. Two uses of *persona*

This urge for sobriety in exegesis is perfectly in line with Calvin's minimalistic attitude towards theologisation. As he was restrained from inquiring into the ontological details of the Son's eternal generation in his trinitarian teaching, so was he into the ontological details of the hypostatic union in the christological context.³³ Compared with the Cappadocian fathers or the great Alexandrian teachers, Calvin showed little interest in

³² *ibid.*

³³ Even for those scholars who are prepared to defend there is a real ontological ground for Calvin's notion of *communicatio idiomatum*, they are to admit Calvin's reticence about its ontological foundation: "Calvin's awe before the mystery and his distaste for speculation set limits to his inquiry into what, in retrospect, may be called the ontological foundation of the incarnation." Willis (1966) 66; "I also think that had Calvin offered any explanation of the *communicatio idiomatum*, and had he given rules for its predication, this would have made it a bit too philosophico-speculative." J. N. Tylenda, "Calvin's Understanding of the Communication of Properties," *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 (1975) 55-66, n.17.

drawing the soteriological significance from the ontological interaction between both natures within the incarnate person.³⁴ His elaboration on the term “hypostatic union” is indeed notoriously brief. The term occurs only twice in a single section of the 1559 *Institutes*, where it is monotonously repeated as “that which constitutes one person out of two natures”,³⁵ totally in want of any deeper reflection. Moreover, Raitt observes Calvin’s limited use of the word *persona* in the trinitarian context and comments,

In Calvin’s mind, office and person are closely paired. Indeed they seem to be more closely paired than *person* and *hypostasis*. In both *Institutes* I, 13 and in his commentary on John 1:1 Calvin does not use the word *person*, but *hypostasis* and *subsistence* and uses *person* only when speaking of the Latin Fathers and the Greeks’ use of *prosopa*.³⁶

³⁴ Regarding Christ’s assuming flesh and soul, Gregory Nazianzen writes, “for that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved;” and “but if it was that He might destroy the condemnation by sanctifying like by like, then as He needed flesh for the sake of the flesh which had incurred condemnation, and soul for the sake of our soul, so, too, He needed mind for the sake of mind, which not only fell in Adam, but was the first to be affected, as the doctors say of illnesses.” Gregory Nazianzen Epistle 101 (*PG* 37:181-4, 187-8), Eng. translation is from *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series 2 Vol. 7, H. Wace & P. Schaff (eds) (Oxford:James Parker,) 400, 401. The notion of sin as illness that was being healed through the union was quite foreign to Calvin; instead, he tended to regard sin as disobedience. On the other hand, regarding the virgin birth, Cyril writes, “This was not as though he needed necessarily or for his own nature a birth in time and in the last times of this age, but in order that he might bless the beginning of our existence, in order that seeing that it was a woman that had given birth to him, united to the flesh, the curse against the whole race should thereafter cease, ...” Cyril’s third letter to Nestorius, Tanner 58. For Calvin, though he admitted the penalty of sin was paid from the moment of Christ’s birth, the substitution of the curse was seen on the cross rather than the virgin birth. In fact, besides defending it as fulfilment of promise and seed of the real humanity, Calvin was relatively reticent on the virgin birth, and there was no particular treatment of it in his exposition of the second article of the Apostles’ Creed.

³⁵ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 5 (*CO* 2:357).

³⁶ J. Raitt. “Calvin’s Use of Persona,” in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, W. H. Neuser (ed.) (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984) 273-287, at 278. For her analysis on Calvin’s various uses of “persona”, see also “The Person of the Mediator: Calvin’s Christology and Beza’s Fidelity,” in *Occasional Papers of the American Society for Reformation Research* Vol. 1, ed. R. C. Walton, et al (St. Louis: American Society for Reformation Research, 1977) 53-80. In the 1977 article, Raitt rightly discerns Calvin’s two uses of “persona” and says, “Since Calvin has pressed the Christological problem into the relation of Christ to the persons of the Trinity without clarifying further his statement regarding the two uses of the word person, he has bequeathed this ambiguity to his successors.” Raitt (1977) 55.

Formal as the formulation in Book I was, Calvin at least thought through the use of both *persona* and *hypostasis* and accepted them as synonyms in the trinitarian context. On the contrary, such thoughtfulness cannot be found in the christological context. In the 1559 *Institutes*, Calvin kept employing the term *persona* to signify the incarnate person and restrained himself from using the Chalcedonian synonym *hypostasis*,³⁷ which seemed to be reserved for the eternal subsistence in the divine essence.³⁸ This intriguing use of the term *persona*, together with his reluctance to articulate the ontological details of the hypostatic union, left Calvin open to the impression that the term in the christological context actually carries a meaning different from that in the trinitarian context.³⁹ This ambiguity came to light when Calvin was dealing with the threats arising from George Blandrata and Francesco Stancaro in the last decade of his life. In his response to the antitrinitarian Blandrata in 1558, Calvin clarified his two uses of the term *persona*:

The word person, when used of Christ, may be taken in two ways. As the Word born of the Father before the creation of the world, the person is in the eternal essence of God; and as Christ, God made manifest in the flesh, he is constituted one person by the union of the two natures. Hence, it is one thing

³⁷ “σωζομένης δὲ μᾶλλον τῆς ιδιότητος ἑκατέρας φύσεως καὶ εἰς ἓν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν συντρεχούσας” in Greek or “nusquam sublata differentia naturarum propter unionem magisque salva proprietate utriusque naturae et in unam personam atque subsistentiam concurrente” in Latin, Tanner 86.

³⁸ *Inst.* (1559) I, 13, 2-6. In the trinitarian context, Calvin employed “persona”, “hypostasis” and “subsistentia” as synonyms. However, in book II where christology was discussed, the term “hypostasis” only appeared once in II, 14, 8 and was used to refer to the eternal person of the Son.

³⁹ As discussed before, Calvin adopted the scholastic *totus-totum* distinction. However, *totus* in his writings is confined to the person of Mediator, whereas Peter Lombard carefully argued the connection and identity between incarnate person and the pre-existent person: “Utique totus eodem tempore erat in inferno, totus in caelo, totus ubique. Persona enim illa aeterna non maior erat ubi carnem et animam simul unita [sic] sibi habebat, quam ubi alterum tantum; nec maior erat ubi utrumque simul vel alterum tantum unitum habebat, quam ubi erat neutrum habens unitum. Totus ergo Christus et perfectus ubique erat.” *Sentences* III, d. 22, c.3, *Spicilegium Bonaventurianum* V (ed.) Ignatius Brady, O. F. M (Grottaferrata: Collegii S. Bonaventurae Ad Claras Aquas, 1981) 138-139.

to speak about the eternal Wisdom of God before he took on flesh, and another to speak about the Mediator by whom he was revealed in the flesh.⁴⁰

The distinction of the two uses of *persona* is highlighted in order to accommodate the discrepancy between the undiminished majesty of the eternal Word and the inferior, intermediate rank of Christ the Mediator. This is even more prominent in Calvin's responses to Stancaro in 1560-61, in which he strove to refute Stancaro's teaching that Christ is the Mediator according to his humanity alone:

These two facts, that the λόγος and eternal son of God is equal to the Father and that the mediator is less than the Father are no more incompatible than these two, that the λόγος by itself and separately is a divine person and, nevertheless, that the one person of Christ the mediator is constituted by two natures.⁴¹

So, in Calvin's language, he tended to emphasise the difference between the pre-existent person and the incarnate person. Calvin differentiated these two persons so that he could teach that "what truly and suitably belongs to the totality [the whole person of the Mediator] ought not to be divided and assigned to the natures, just as the intermediary rank which Christ the Redeemer occupies does not in the least derogate from his divine

⁴⁰ "Nomen vero personae dum Christo ascribitur, bifariam dici potest. Nam et sermo ex patre genitus ante mundi creationem, persona est in aeterna essentia Dei. Et quemadmodum unus est Christus Deus in carne manifestatus: ita duae naturae sic unitae personam unam constituunt. Ideoque aliud est loqui de aeterna Dei sapientia antequam indueret carnem, vel de mediatore ex quo in carne patefactus est." *Responsum ad quaestiones Georgii Blandratae* (1558) CO 9:326, ET from J. N. Tylenda, "The Warning That Went Unheeded: John Calvin on Giorgio Biandrata," *Calvin Theological Journal* 12 (1977) 55.

⁴¹ "Neque enim haec magis inter se pugnant, λόγον et aeternum Dei filium patri esse aequalem et mediatorem esse minorem patre, quam altera duo, λόγον per se et seorsum efficere personam in divinis, et tamen unam Christi et mediatoris personam constitui ex duabus naturis." *Ministrorum ecclesiae Genevensis responsio ad nobiles Polonos et Franciscum Stancarum Mantuanum de controversia mediatoris* (1561) CO 9:355, ET from J. N. Tylenda, "The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin's Second Reply to Stancaro," *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1973) 153.

essence”.⁴² We have mentioned that, for the sake of completeness and distinctiveness of both natures, Calvin drew a line of demarcation between the incarnate person and the two underlying natures. Here, a corresponding line of demarcation was induced between the incarnate person and the pre-existent person. This proved to be a stumbling block for Calvin’s Polish contemporaries in their struggle against Stancaro, as Williams points out:

Calvin’s tract against Stancaro was disturbingly ambiguous to the Polish synodists. ... The difficulty arose because Calvin accepted Stancaro’s basic premise of the inferiority of Christ *qua* Mediator, but on a basis different from that of Stancaro, namely, that in the Mediator “two natures constitute one Person” *composita*, and hence the intimation of the inferiority of Christ *qua* Person also. Consequently, Calvin seemed to the Polish synodists to come close to positing two persons and thus confirming the charge of Nestorianism (their own charge against Stancaro) and the charge of both cosmological and soteriological Arianism.⁴³

Happily enough, these two uses of *persona* are not so entirely consistent in Calvin’s thought as to head straight for their heretical conclusion. Two observations are noteworthy. First, Calvin could sometimes suspend altogether the language of *persona* and assert the identity between the pre-existent Son and the incarnate person of the Mediator in an intuitive manner:

we confess that the Mediator, who was born of the virgin, is properly the Son of God. ... he is believed to be the Son of God because the Word begotten of the Father before all ages took human nature in a hypostatic union. ... the eternal Word, before he was clothed with flesh, was already the Son of God;⁴⁴

⁴² “quod vere atque apte competit in totum complexum, non debere distrahi ad naturas, sicut medius hic gradus, quem tenet Christus redemptor, nihil derogat prorsus divinae eius essentiae.” *CO* 9:355, Tylenda (1973) 153.

⁴³ G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2000) 1039. However, we cannot agree with Williams’ suggestion that “the distinction, between Christ as a complex of human and divine natures and the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, was not clearly made to the Poles.” *ibid.* 1040. If that were the case, it would not have aroused the aforesaid anxiety towards Nestorianism. We are of the opinion that the real problem arose from Calvin’s reluctance to articulate clearly the identity between the pre-existent person and the incarnate person.

⁴⁴ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 5 (*CO* 2:356-7).

When he [the Evangelist] says that the Word became flesh, we plainly infer the unity of His person. For it does not make sense that He who is now man should be any other than He who was always very God, since it is God who is said to have become man. ... In short, the Son of God began to be man in such a way that He is still that eternal Word who had no temporal beginning.⁴⁵

But as the two natures constitute but one person, and Christ is one who came forth from the Father that He might put on our flesh, the apostle rightly states in general that He had always been the same and invisible and afterwards became visible.⁴⁶

Although Calvin paid no heed to the fact that these statements unavoidably call for a refinement, if not correction, of his two uses of *persona*, they at least could be reckoned as a sincere adherence to the Chalcedonian “one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten”.⁴⁷ In this way, Calvin, though failing to reconcile with his more explicit teachings, rescued his thought from lapsing into Nestorianism.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Comm. on John 1:14 (CO 47:14) CCNT 20-21.

⁴⁶ Comm. on 1 John 1:1 (CO 55:300) CCNT 234. Also, “Sermo enim caro factus dicitur, quia carnem induit, ut qui aeternus erat Deus, idem homo quoque mortalis esset: nec solum ut humanitas templum esset deitatis, sed ut naturis duabus in unam personam unitis, ille per quem eramus creati, idem esset et redemptor noster.” CO 9:326, Tylenda (1977) 55.

⁴⁷ For the arguments regarding the assumption of the flesh in the *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 5-8, Raitt comments, “His understanding of the hypostatic union also follows the Chalcedonian formula. But Calvin does not thereafter speak of the *person* of the Word assuming human nature. Rather he consistently writes that the divine *nature* assumes human nature, so that the person of the mediator is made of both natures.” Raitt (1977) 55. We are not so sure that Calvin is there deliberately asserting that it was the divine nature rather than the person who undertook the act of assuming. Indeed, he is so reluctant to probe into the ontological details of the hypostatic union that it is quite difficult to tell his exact position in this matter. We are of the opinion that Calvin holds the identity between the pre-existent person and the incarnate person, between the person of Creator and the person of Redeemer, without further deliberation, which is fatally necessary in his controversies with his Lutheran critics, Blandrata and Stancaro.

⁴⁸ Krusche also discerns similar ambiguity in Calvin’s thought, when he comments, “Der Logos extra carnem und der Logos intra carnem sind ja nicht zwei verschiedene Logoi (wenngleich Calvin nicht deutlich zu machen vermag, wieso sie das nicht sind), sondern sie der eine Logos, die Zweite Person der Trinität, der Sohn, der mit dem Vater verbunden ist durch den gleichermaßen von ihnen ausgehenden Geist.” W. Krusche, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957) 129.

Secondly, the restriction that what truly and suitably belongs to the whole person of Mediator ought not to be divided and assigned to the natures is not thoroughly enforced in Calvin's thought. In other words, the line of demarcation between the incarnate person and the two underlying natures is not entirely "air-tight". For instance, regarding the honour of being "the Son of God", Calvin argued in the *Institutes*:

I contend that he is called Son of God by virtue of his deity and eternal essence [*deitatis aeternaeque essentiae ratione vocari Dei filium*]. For it is just as appropriate to refer the fact that he is called "Son of God" to his divine nature, as it is to refer the fact that he is called "Son of man" to his human nature.⁴⁹

Therefore, this honour and dignity originally belongs to the divine nature alone. But owing to the fact that one person of Mediator is constituted out of two natures, this epithet due to the divine nature is consequently ascribed to the whole person of Christ:

And we extend this honor to the entire person of the Mediator [*Atque hunc honorem extendimus ad totam mediatoris personam*] – so that he is truly and properly the Son of God who was both born of the virgin and offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father on the cross.⁵⁰

If the restriction of attribution is strictly applied, this title should not be ascribed back to the human nature. On the contrary, in his response to Blandrata, Calvin argued,

What is predicated of Christ sometimes has special reference to his other nature. The name Christ belongs not to the man alone but to God made manifest in the flesh; the anointing, on the other hand, is properly referred to the humanity. The Mediator, God-man, is truly the Son of God according to

⁴⁹ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 6 (CO 2:358).

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

both natures by reason of their union; but it is properly referred to the divinity, because the Word was born of the Father before all ages.⁵¹

Thus, the theological treatment of the statement “the man Jesus is Son of God” or “God manifest in the flesh is Christ” is quite different from that of the statement “Christ is the Lord over all things until the last judgement”. For the latter, Calvin would say that this peculiar lordship only belonged to the whole person, i.e. the incarnate person of Christ. As a mere man, He should not have been given such a supreme authority, whereas, as the eternal God, He held the same lordship as the Father, which “had no beginning and will have no end”.⁵² The designation “lord until the last judgement” cannot be divided and assigned to His divinity, otherwise its eternal sovereignty will be derogated. However, in the former case, the Mediator is as truly the Son of God according to His humanity as according to His divinity, and as truly Christ according to His divinity as according to His humanity. So, the titles “Son of God” and “Christ” of the whole person are then assigned to both natures, violating Calvin’s own prohibition. The only qualification Calvin reminded us of is that these epithets have a special reference to a certain nature, because that nature gives rise to it and shares with the other only by reason of union.⁵³ This practice can also be observed in a less express manner in the *Institutes*:

⁵¹ “Iam quae praedicantur de Christo, specialem interdum respectum habent ad alteram naturam ... Mediator Deus et homo, vere est filius Dei secundum utramque naturam ratione unionis, proprie tamen divinitatis respectu, quia sermo est ante saecula ex patre genitus.” *CO* 9:332, Tylenda (1977) 62.

⁵² *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 3 (*CO* 2:355).

⁵³ Before discussing this predication problem, Calvin has compared the unity-in-distinction in the christological problem with that in the trinitarian one: “Hence, they spoke of three coeternal [persons] but nevertheless one eternal God; eternity resides only in one God which, however, is common to three persons. So, as two natures constitute one Christ because the same God-man is of two natures, so three persons constitute the one God, because his essence which is one and simple consists in three persons.” *CO* 9:331-332, Tylenda (1977) 62. This notion of “special reference to one nature” may be a christological

We therefore hold that Christ, as he is God and man, consisting of two natures united but not mingled, is our Lord and the true Son of God even according to, but not by reason of, his humanity [*Christum ... Dominum nostrum verumque Dei filium esse ..., etiam secundum humanitatem, etsi non ratione humanitatis*].⁵⁴

the man Christ [*homo Christus*] would not be the mirror of God's inestimable grace unless this dignity had been conferred upon him, that he should both be the only-begotten Son of God and be so called [*in eum collata esset haec dignitas ut sit ac vocetur unigenitus Dei filius*].⁵⁵

Calvin's theological instinct tells him that the gospel stands or falls with the confession that the man Jesus (not only "the person who is also man", but "even according to his humanity") encountered and witnessed by the Apostles is the true Son of God. Jesus should truly own the eternal sonship even according to his humanity.⁵⁶ In

adaptation of the doctrine of appropriation, according to which the property of divine essence (realm of unity in the trinitarian context), though equally applicable to all divine persons (realm of distinction), can have a special association with a certain person. Similarly, in the christological context, the property of the resultant person (realm of unity), though applicable to all constituting natures (realm of distinction), can have a special association with a certain nature. For the potential danger of assimilation of christological and trinitarian teachings, see G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S. P. C. K., 1964) 265-281.

⁵⁴ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 4 (CO 2:356).

⁵⁵ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 5 (CO 2:356-7).

⁵⁶ Regarding the sonship of the Mediator, Raitt writes, "Has not Calvin thereby left himself open to the charge of Nestorianism? For if the person of the Word is the Son of God *properly* and the person of the mediator is so only by extension, are there not, in effect, two persons?" Raitt (1977) 57. Raitt is right in discerning that there are in effect two persons in Calvin's thought. However, Calvin is clear enough to so differentiate them that they are operating in two different dimensions: one is ontological, while the other is functional in orientation. This differentiation saves it from the Nestorian notion of two separate redeeming agents as well as two centres of adoration, for the mission of the functional one is to elevate us to adore the one glory, with which the ontological one fully shares. In Calvin's thought, the person of the Mediator in the divine economy is more or less regarded as the product of the union, rather than the assuming subject as deliberated by exponents after Chalcedon. Within this framework, it is legitimate to say that the eternal sonship is "extended" to the incarnate person, otherwise it may leave itself open to the suspicion of teaching some sort of pre-existent body. Nevertheless, Calvin is theologically sensitive enough to say, "Et nos quidem fatemur mediatorem, qui ex virgine natus est, *proprie* esse Dei filium" *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 5 (CO 2:356). Even further, he can embrace the statement that the Mediator according to his humanity is the only-begotten Son of God, on condition that the humanity is said to receive this dignity through the union. This deliberation cannot be reckoned as totally alien to the Chalcedonian tradition (or more precisely, traditions), for Leo the Great also expressed a similar idea in his Tome: "As God is not changed by showing mercy, neither is humanity devoured by the dignity received."

other words, it is quite untenable for Christian faith to have so sharp a line of demarcation between the two underlying natures and the incarnate person that one become unilaterally sealed off from the other. At some point of his argument, Calvin had to give up his logical consistency and allow the scriptural witness to take its course.

In short, there is some happy inconsistency left in Calvin's notion of *persona*. It is a happy one because it rescues Calvin from falling short of the core message of the gospel. However, this does not alter the fact that his overall teachings, shaped by the theological impetus behind the *extra Calvinisticum*, tend to draw a line of demarcation between the person of Mediator and the underlying natures and thus shift a problem of natures to a problem of person or office of Mediator. We will proceed to examine how this affects his attitude towards the interaction between the two natures, that is, his understanding of *communicatio idiomatum*.

III. *Extra Calvinisticum* and *Communicatio Idiomatum*

As mentioned above, there are four categories of scriptural statements expressing the unity of person out of two natures and the fourth category is called "communication of properties" (or its Latin equivalent, *communicatio idiomatum*). Among Calvin scholars, there has been a debate upon Calvin's notion of *communicatio idiomatum*. Some scholars are of the opinion that Calvin viewed it as a matter of speaking or just used it as a hermeneutical rule.⁵⁷ There is no real ontological interchange of properties. Others

⁵⁷ Witte 503; P. van Buren, *Christ in Our Place* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957) 20; K. McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church and the Eucharist* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967) 217.

thought Calvin did teach a restricted notion of interchange, “by which a subject [the person of the Mediator] denominated by one of his two natures [e.g. God, Son of man, etc.], so possesses the other nature and its properties that these properties may be truly attributed to him”.⁵⁸ This group of scholars emphasises that the hypostatic union does provide an ontological ground for this interchange, although the interchange is not allowed to happen between two natures as such.

The nature of Calvin’s understanding of *communicatio idiomatum* is closely connected with his doctrine of *extra Calvinisticum*. In fact, the earliest classic text of the *extra Calvinisticum* is itself an exposition on *communication idiomatum*. As early as in the 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin already put forward his understanding of *communicatio idiomatum*. And this understanding remained basically unchanged throughout his whole life:

But the communicating of characteristics or properties consists in what Paul says: ‘God purchased the church with his blood’ [Acts 20:28], and ‘the Lord of glory was crucified’ [1 Cor. 2:8]. John says the same: ‘The Word of life was handled’ [1 John 1:1]. Surely God does not have blood, does not suffer, cannot be touched with hands. But since Christ, who was true God and also true man, was crucified and shed his blood for us, the things that he carried out in his human nature are transferred improperly, although not without reason [*improprie, licet non sine ratione, transferuntur*], to his divinity. Here is a similar example: John teaches ‘that God laid down his life for us’ [1 John 3:16]. Accordingly, there also a property of humanity is shared with the other nature. Again, when Christ, still living on earth, said: ‘No one has ascended into heaven but the Son of man who was in heaven’ [John 3:13], surely then, as man, in the flesh that he had taken upon himself, he was not in heaven. But because the selfsame one was both God and man, for the sake of the union of

⁵⁸ A definition suggested by J. N. Tylenda, “Calvin’s Understanding of the Communication of Properties,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 (1975) 65-6. On the other hand, Willis also tries to pinpoint its ontological foundation, though he admits that Calvin uses it primarily as a hermeneutical tool.

both natures he gave to the one what belonged to the other [*propter duplicis naturae unionem alteri dabat quod erat alterius*].⁵⁹

Attention should be paid to the adverb *improprie* in Calvin's exposition. It indicates in a negative way what is really *proprium* in Calvin's mind. For him, the statement "God purchased the church with his blood" does not imply that the Mediator had blood according to His divinity. In the final analysis, the statement is a contracted form of the statement "Christ the Mediator, who possesses full divinity, purchased the church with the blood which he shed according to his human nature". "Shedding" or "having" blood can only be *improprie* transferred to God, because it only *proprie* belongs to the human nature and consequently the whole person of Mediator. As we have seen before, according to Calvin, this property of the whole person ought not to be divided and assigned to the divine nature. The phrase "although not without reason" indicates that this transfer is not done arbitrarily, but justified by reason of "one person out of two natures". But why do the scriptures speak in such a contracted form? Calvin's explanation was: "they so earnestly express this union of the two natures".⁶⁰ Driven by the same earnestness, Christ himself also "gave to the one what belonged to the other" "for the sake of the union of both natures". So, this "giving" does not mean that Christ actually conferred the property of one nature on the other, but that Christ earnestly expressed this union in such a rhetorical way. As with those passages which refer neither to the divinity alone nor to the humanity alone, the puzzle raised by passages of *communicatio idiomatum* is to be resolved in the realm of *persona*. Calvin's

⁵⁹ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 2 (CO 2:354).

⁶⁰ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 1 (CO 2:353).

understanding of *communicatio idiomatum* can fairly be summarised in Willis' saying: "For Calvin, the *communicatio idiomatum* is primarily a hermeneutical tool to keep in balance the varied Scriptural witness to the One Person".⁶¹

Although this linguistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum* finds its justification in a real hypostatic union, it should be distinguished from the realistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum* taught by some theologians like Cyril of Alexandria. For the latter, it can be said that after the union some divine properties are properly communicated to the human nature, while the divine nature remains unimpaired. Its classic illustration is that of fire and an iron bar: after the iron bar has been plunged into the fire, the bar glows into red-hotness sharing a property of fire whereas the fire itself remains unchanged. The interchange really happened only after the union. However, in Calvin's case, since *communicatio idiomatum* serves only as a hermeneutical tool to witness the union and in itself carries no real ontological implication, it can be invoked to deal with improper designation even before the union.⁶² For example, when commenting on 1 Cor. 10:9, Calvin explained the anachronistic use of the designation "Christ" by reason of *communicatio idiomatum*:

⁶¹ Willis, 67.

⁶² In discussing Calvin's *communicatio idiomatum*, Tylenda says, "Since we are talking about an interchange of properties, and the properties proceed from each of the two natures, it follows that there can only be such an interchange or communication because of the fact of the hypostatic union" and "The Word who was Mediator, but not yet incarnate, could not have been the subject of the communication of properties; rather, only when he is in possession of both natures could he be the subject of such predication." Tylenda (1975) 59 n.13. This saying cannot do justice to Calvin's attempts to reconcile temporal impropriety observed in the scriptures by means of the notion.

Again, the angel who first appeared to Moses and then was always with the people on their journey is often called Jahweh (יהוה). We should conclude, then, that that angel was the Son of God, and that even then He was already the Guide of the Church, of which He was the Head. Because the designation Christ has a meaning that is appropriate to His human nature, it could not yet be applied to the Son of God at that time; but it is given to Him here through communication of properties just as we read elsewhere that ‘the Son of Man came from heaven’ (John 3:13).⁶³

Contrary to the realistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum*, Calvin’s own notion was employed to rule out the direct influence of the divinity upon the humanity and thus preserve the distinctiveness of both natures.⁶⁴ This can be seen most clearly in Calvin’s dedication letter to Frederick of Palatine written one year before his death:

For if the infinity of God appertains to the flesh of Christ, because God was manifested in the flesh, with equal reason his divinity may be said to have grieved and to have been thirsty, and to have been subject to death, and, in short, to have died; for they cannot escape, as it is a similar mode of reasoning. ... What they [the Lutherans] bring forward as to the communication of properties, it is unreasonable, and what I may say without offending them, they mistake in a matter that is very simple and plain; for to ascribe what is peculiar to deity to the Son of man, and again to attribute to deity what belongs only to humanity, is very improper and rash. To prevent the ignorant from stumbling by blending together different things, and to take away from the dishonest any occasion for contending, orthodox writers have called this figure “the communication of properties” [*ne rudes impingerent confuse res diversas miscendo vel improbi vixandi materiam arriperent, hanc figuram vocarunt orthodoxi scriptores ἰδιωμάτων κοινωνίαν*]. What they have said of certain expressions, has been with little thought applied to the subject. While Christ was on earth he said that the Son of man was in heaven. That no one, ill-informed, might think Christ’s body to be infinite, it has been

⁶³ Comm. on 1 Cor. 10:9 (CO 49:459) CCNT 209-210.

⁶⁴ However, simply based upon his notion of *communicatio idiomatum*, one should not rashly judge whether or not Calvin was faithful to Chalcedon, for the term *communicatio idiomatum* or its Greek equivalent, unlike hypostatic union, does not appear in the canonical documents of Chalcedon. That means, even if a theologian altogether avoids the term in his writings or refuses to accept any particular notion of *communicatio idiomatum*, he cannot be said to be unfaithful to Chalcedon simply by this fact. Calvin’s “Holy Spirit as bond” may well be an alternative to the realistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum*.

deemed necessary to meet this case by a plain admonition, that on account of the unity of person what is suitable only to divinity has been said of the Son of man. ... As it was the fathers' design to employ this figure of speech for the purpose of teaching the simple and ignorant, it is absurd and even shameful to apply it for a different purpose, and to say that the communication of properties is the real blending of two natures [*Quum patribus loquendi figuram ad simplices docendos accommodare propositum fuerit, vel perperam vel parum verecunde alio trahitur ut proprietatum communicatio realis sit mixtura utriusque naturae*].⁶⁵

Calvin's appeals to the orthodox writers are remarkable. He tried to argue that the right use of *communicatio idiomatum* is to keep the two natures from confusion. According to Calvin, the Lutherans in his time were employing *communicatio idiomatum* for a purpose exactly opposite to its original design. This passage also informed us of another anxiety of Calvin towards the misuse of *communicatio idiomatum*. If the majestic properties of the divinity can be properly communicated to the humanity, then the feeble properties of the humanity can by the same reasoning be properly communicated to the divinity. This will directly defy the classic notion of divine impassibility and immortality.⁶⁶

However, as we have seen that there is some inconsistency in Calvin's two uses of *persona*, so the *improprie* in his notion of *communicatio idiomatum* cannot be thoroughly symmetric. This is found in the earliest text of the *extra Calvinisticum*, with which

⁶⁵ Dedication letter of Commentary on Jeremiah (CO 20:74; Epistle 3986). ET from *Commentaries on the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentation* Vol. 1, Calvin's Commentaries Vol. 9, J. Owen (trans.) originally for the Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999) xix.

⁶⁶ In retrospect, we may think Calvin's worry was somewhat out of proportion, and we may as well criticise whether divine impassibility is a valid ontological presupposition faithful to the gospel. However, that was a sixteenth-century consensus shared nearly by all Christian thinkers and certainly by all reformers. Moreover, one should also note that Eutyches was officially accused of violating divine impassibility in the Chalcedonian definition. Before there was any new interpretation of the Chalcedonian notion of divine impassibility, any casual violation of it might result in the charge of Eutychianism.

Calvin for his first time employed *communicatio idiomatum* to refute the ubiquity of Christ's body. In the section regarding the Lord's Supper of the 1536 *Institutes*, he wrote,

They allege Christ himself has said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man, who is in heaven" [John 3:13]. But are they so senseless as not to see that this was said through "communication of properties"? Surely, when the Lord of glory is said by Paul to have been crucified [1 Cor. 2:8], it is not because he suffered according to his divinity, but because Christ, who, cast down and despised, suffered in the flesh, was very God and Lord of glory.⁶⁷

Here Calvin was dealing with some opponents who took John 3:13 as a proof-text to justify that Christ's flesh was ubiquitous in some sense. Calvin accused them of misinterpreting the passage. According to Calvin, it should be rightly read in the light of *communicatio idiomatum*. Calvin first alluded to 1 Cor. 2:8 as an obvious example of *communicatio idiomatum*. The Lord of glory, i.e. God Himself, was well accepted as impassible and immortal. But since the Mediator, who was also the Lord of glory, suffered in the flesh, the predicate "having been crucified" was *improprie* transferred to the divinity. Based on this "indisputable" fact, Calvin proceeded to offer a correct reading of John 3:13,

In this way he was also Son of man in heaven [John 3:13], for the very same Christ, who, according to the flesh, dwelt as Son of man on earth, was God in heaven [*Ad hunc modum et filius hominis in coelo erat, quia ipse idem Christus, qui secundum carnem hominis filius habitabat in terris, Deus erat in coelo*].⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *Inst.* (1536) 105 (CO 1:121-2).

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

“Ad hunc modum” undoubtedly refers to *communicatio idiomatum*. Calvin argued that Christ according to His humanity was not in heaven during His ministry on earth, just as Christ according to His divinity did not suffer during the crucifixion. Strictly speaking, “being in heaven” belongs to the divinity and consequently to the whole person of Christ. But, with respect to *communicatio idiomatum*, this predication was *improprie* transferred to “Son of man”, a denomination according to the human nature. This improper attribution is not intended to tell us anything new about Christ’s humanity, but earnestly to remind us of the fact that the person of Mediator is constituted out of two natures. After all, Christ’s humanity was the same as ours, and remained distinct from his divinity. The opponents were mistaken in ascribing a heavenly attribute, i.e. ubiquity, to Christ’s humanity. So far, Calvin employed *communicatio idiomatum* for a purpose of preventing the two natures from confusion, which later became his “orthodox” use of the notion up to at least 1563.

However, since John 3:13 contained the idea of descent from heaven, Calvin held himself responsible to provide an interpretation covering that part and produced the classic text of the *extra Calvinisticum*:

In this manner, he is said to have descended to that place according to his divinity, not because divinity left heaven to hide itself in the prison house of the body, but because even though it filled all things, still in Christ’s very humanity it dwelt bodily [Col. 2:9], that is, by nature, and in a certain ineffable way [*Qua ratione, eo ipso loco, descendisse dicitur secundum divinitatem; non quod divinitas coelum reliquerit, ut in ergastulum corporis se abderet, sed quia, tametsi omnia impleret, in ipsa tamen Christi humanitate corporaliter, id est, naturaliter habitabat et ineffabili quodam modo (Col. 2)*].⁶⁹

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

“Qua ratione” may mean that Calvin still had *communicatio idiomatum* in mind when he proceeded to cope with the idea of descent from heaven. Since the Son of man on earth in some improper manner was said to be in heaven, Calvin would like to interpret God’s descent from heaven in a similar manner. But it should be noted that there was a subtle change of tone in employing *communicatio idiomatum* to explain this descent. Christ was said to have descended to that place “secundum divinitatem”. All subjects of the subsequent sentences are the nature “divinity”, not the person of Mediator. The biblical text does inform us something about the divinity. The descent was then further elaborated by “corporaliter habitabat” in Col. 2:9, where Calvin understood *corporaliter* as *naturaliter*. According to his Commentary on Colossians in 1548, Calvin explained the adverb *corporaliter* in Col. 2:9 as follows:

Interpreters explain variously the adverb *bodily* [*corporaliter*]. I do not doubt that it is employed improperly for “substantially” [*Ego improprie positum non dubito, pro substantialiter*]. For he places the manifestation of God, which we have in Christ over against all others that have ever been made. For God has often exhibited Himself to men, but only in part. In Christ, however, He communicates Himself to us wholly [*In Christo autem totum se nobis communicat*]. He has also manifested Himself otherwise, but in figures, or by power and grace. In Christ, however, He has appeared to us essentially [*In Christo autem essentialiter nobis apparuit*]. Thus the statement of John holds good: “He that hath the Son, hath the Father also” (1 John 2:23). For those who possess Christ have God truly present, and enjoy Him wholly [*Deum enim habent vere praesentem, ipsoque penitus fruuntur qui Christum possident*].⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Comm. on Col. 2:9 (CO 52:104) CCNT 331. For consistency, we change the translation of “improprie” from “imprecisely” to “improperly”. Also, in commenting on John 2:19, Calvin also explicitly singles out the unique manner of divine presence in the incarnation: “It ought to be observed, that our bodies also are called temples of God [1 Cor. 3:16, and 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16], but it is in a different sense, namely, because God dwells in us by the power and grace of his Spirit; but in Christ the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, so that he is truly God manifested in flesh [1 Tim. 3:16].”

Therefore, both the descent from heaven in John 3:13 and bodily dwelling in Col. 2:9 speak in their own ways of the one mystery of an utterly different theophany, in which the divinity was truly, wholly, uniquely, essentially present in Christ's flesh. Although the property of being corporal or circumscribed in space cannot be properly ascribed to the divinity, with respect to the presence of the divinity on earth the *improprie* of *communicatio idiomatum* did not divert our attention from the underlying nature to the person as it did with respect to the presence of humanity in heaven. "Being on earth" is not *improprie* transferred to the divinity, but *proprie* to the unprecedented extent. The stigma of *improprie* falls not on the reality of the theophany, but on its mode. This "descent from the heaven", this "dwelling bodily", this "being clothed in the flesh" cannot imply a cessation of its former condition.⁷¹

In short, as there is some inconsistency in Calvin's two uses of *persona*, there is also some asymmetry in his use of *communicatio idiomatum*. This asymmetry is also a happy one. If Calvin had interpreted "God on earth" in a strictly symmetrical manner as he did for "Man in heaven" in John 3:13, the formulation of God's presence in Jesus would not

⁷¹ In arguing that Calvin's *communicatio idiomatum* is not a mere manner of speaking, Tylanda says, "I read Calvin as saying that the *idiomata* are not words or expressions, but properties or realities, and hence, the *communicatio idiomatum* is not a mere manner of speaking. In the real order, the communication of idioms is based on the union of the two natures in one person; in the logical order it is constituted by the predication of human properties to Christ-God, and by the predication of divine properties to Christ-Man. ...I doubt that Calvin would say that John's expression, "The Word was made flesh," is only a manner of speaking." Tylanda (1975) 63 n.21. Calvin never associated John 1:14 with *communicatio idiomatum*. But if it is not entirely rash to assume that Calvin would accept it as a Johannine expression of his favourite "God manifested in the flesh" in 1 Tim. 3:16, then we will have reason to believe that for Calvin the descent from heaven in John 3:13 and the bodily dwelling in Col. 2:9 are of the same essence as the "becoming" in John 1:14. In this manner, the asymmetric nature of Calvin's *communicatio idiomatum* should also be taken into account, when it is applied to John 1:14. In fact, Tylanda's own definition of *communicatio idiomatum* is even stricter than Calvin's actual practice, for Calvin can accept that the dignity of eternal sonship, which was arising in the divine nature, was properly conferred upon Christ's human nature and; in case of John 3:13 he can directly confess the ineffable presence of the divinity (not the person who has also the full divinity) in the flesh.

have been “confined” enough to distinguish it from other unconfined presence, i.e. filling everywhere in general and special presence to prophets and apostles in particular, and Calvin would then have exposed himself at least to the suspicion of adoptionism or Nestorianism. At this critical point, Calvin had to suspend his escape to the realm of person and reinstate those essential terms such as *naturaliter*, *substantialiter* and *essentialiter*.⁷²

IV. *Communicatio Idiomatum* and the Holy Spirit as Bond

We have seen that the theological impetus behind the *extra Calvinisticum* led Calvin to shift the conventional problem of two natures to a problem of the person or office of Mediator. The centre of gravity of the christological inquiry therefore leans on the functions of the Mediator in the economy of salvation. Also, the same theological concern drove Calvin to deny any realistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum*. In his hand, *communicatio idiomatum* was largely employed to prevent any direct interaction between the two underlying natures. The occasional verbal interchanges of denominations observed in the scripture are meant to point us back to the realm of person and office of the Mediator. However, this denial of any realistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum* demands an alternative account for the divine influence on the human nature. As it first came to light in his eucharistic teachings, Calvin’s solution was to invoke the

⁷² This asymmetry enables Calvin to be more in line with the Chalcedonian zeal in confessing the reality of Emmanuel: “For you must surely know that almost all our fight for the faith arose in connexion with our insistence that the holy virgin is the mother of God. But if we claim that the holy body of our common saviour Christ is born from heaven and was not of her, why should she still be considered God-bearer? For whom indeed did she bear, if it is untrue that she bore Emmanuel according to the flesh?” Letter of Cyril to John of Antioch about peace, accepted as canonical document in the Council of Chalcedon, Tanner 71

notion “the Holy Spirit as bond” to take up this task. In other words, Calvin’s office-christology calls for a corresponding office-pneumatology. We will see how the humanity of Christ was elevated and incorporated into the offices of the Mediator in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 5

The Holy Spirit and the Redeeming Works of the Mediator

In the previous chapter, we have shown that the initial impetus behind the *extra Calvinisticum* was to safeguard the completeness and distinctiveness of both natures in the person of the Mediator. Occupied with this concern, Calvin imposed a restriction on direct communication of properties between both natures. In this chapter, we will continue to explore how the divine influence to the humanity was actualised in the works of the Mediator through the virtue of the Holy Spirit. Our enquiry will proceed from two perspectives, namely from the notion of threefold office and from the earthly life of Christ. Based on these findings, we will also discuss the nature of Christ's humanity in the redemption and its relation with the Holy Spirit.

I. The Holy Spirit and Christ's Threefold Office

Before we proceed to examine how the Holy Spirit conferred the divine influence on Christ's humanity during His earthly ministry, it is helpful to see the overall relation between the Holy Spirit and Christ's office of Mediator. Among Calvin scholars, there has been no consensus as to whether the threefold office of Christ is so crucial to Calvin's christology as to the later Reformed dogmatics.¹ However, there are reasons for us to

¹ For defence of the prominence of the twofold office in Calvin's theology, see J. F. Jansen, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1956) and J. B. Torrance, "The Vicarious Humanity and Priesthood of Christ in the Theology of John Calvin," in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Doctor*, W. H.

start with the notion of the threefold office. First, Calvin acknowledged its currency in his own time, and found it necessary to take account of it, harmonising it with the overall cast of his understanding of the redemption.² Secondly, this conception appeared not only in his theological works such as the *Institutes*, but also in his commentaries and other pastoral writings such as the catechism. So, Calvin at least took it as a biblically-proven paradigm to illuminate the person and works of the Mediator and lead believers to deeper reflection on the “purpose and use” of these redeeming works.

Early in his 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin already drew our attention to the anointing of Jesus by the Father. This anointing was done with no other “oil” than the Holy Spirit and historically took place at the baptism of Jesus. Through it, God the Father appointed Jesus to the offices of king and high priest.³ As we will see shortly, Calvin held that the presence and gifts of the Holy Spirit had always been with Jesus even before the baptism. So what was new with this visible coming of the Spirit was actually a public declaration of Christ’s appointment at the beginning of His office. Even before he formulated his fully-fledged notion of the threefold office, this close relation between the public manifestation of Christ’s ministry and that of the Spirit’s outpouring had captured Calvin’s thought. Clear expression of the notion first appeared in the 1539 *Institutes*⁴ and

Neuser (ed.) (Kampen: Kok, 1978) 82-84; for defence of threefold office, R. A. Peterson, *Calvin and the Atonement* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1999), 45-60.

² *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 1 (*CO* 2:361) “For he was given to be prophet, king and priest. Yet it would be of little value to know these names without understanding their purpose and use. The papists use these names, too, but coldly and rather ineffectually, since they do not know what each of these titles contains.” For a historical context of the notion, see Jansen, 23-38.

³ *Inst.* (1536) 54 (*CO* 1:69).

⁴ *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (*CO* 1:513-4): “Christi elogium annectitur, quod tametsi aliis non absurde attribuitur, illi tamen peculiari quodam iure competit. Ungit enim omnes Dominus quibus spiritus sui gratias instillat.

was later incorporated into the 1542 *Genevan Catechism*. In the latter work, Calvin extended his earlier understanding of anointing with the Spirit to explain the title “Christ”:

M: What force then has the name Christ?

C: By this epithet his office is even better expressed. For it signifies that he is anointed by his Father to be King, Priest, and Prophet.

M: But with what kind of oil was he anointed?

C: Not with visible oil, such as was employed in the ancient anointings of kings, priests, and prophets; but more excellently, that is by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is the essence of the external anointing (Ps. 45)⁵

Therefore, the whole office of the Mediator was constituted in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As it was the very mark of Christ’s public life, Calvin was quick to draw its correlation with us:

M: But do you reap any benefit from this?

C: Indeed all these things have no other purpose than our good. For Christ is vouchsafed these things by the Father, in order that he may share them with us, and out of this fulness of his we all draw (John 1:16)

M: Explain this to me a little more fully.

C: Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit and loaded with a perfect abundance of gifts, that he may impart them to us, according to the measure, of course, which the Father knows to be appropriate (Eph. 4:7). So from him as the only source we draw whatever spiritual blessings we possess.⁶

Atqui nemo est fidelium, nec unquam fuit, quem non eiusmodi unctione irrigaverit. Omnes igitur fideles unctos esse conficitur. Habent suam quoque unctionem prophetae; habent et suam tum reges, tum sacerdotes; non illam modo caeremonialem et externam sed spiritualem. ... Quare oleum illud quo tam prophetae quam sacerdotes et reges inaugurabantur, non inane erat symbolum, sed verae illius et unicae unctionis sacramentum. Sed omnia unctionis genera nihil ad hanc salvatoris unctionem. Aliis enim pro dispensationis suae modo varias gratiae portiones impartitur, ut nemo sibi per se sufficiat; at hic tota plenitudine perfunditur.”

⁵ *Genevan Catechism* (CO 6:19-20), ET from LCC XXII 95.

⁶ *Genevan Catechism* (CO 6:21-22) LCC XXII 95-6.

For Calvin, the outpouring of the Spirit upon Christ, as well as the divine influence upon Christ's humanity in the work of the Spirit (Calvin's alternative to the realistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum*), cannot be understood as a private matter closed up within the person of Mediator. It should have relevance to us, for whatever Christ did in His office was not for His own sake but totally for us. This sentiment perfectly agrees with his insistence on the practical knowledge of religion. Calvin's office-christology raises our attention to the corresponding office of the Holy Spirit in our salvation.

i. Prophetic Office

According to Calvin, the prophets in the Old Testament time were endowed with such gifts from God as to teach His people the knowledge about God. They held the people in expectation of the full understanding of salvation. Jesus Christ was related to this office in two ways. On the one hand, all prophecies in the Old Testament were pointing ahead to the coming of the Messiah, which was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. On the other hand, Jesus made known the ultimate revelation of God's salvation plan, discharging the teaching office of a prophet. All treasures of knowledge and understanding are now hid in Jesus Christ, so no one can bypass Christ to obtain higher knowledge about God. In this manner, Christ was the consummation of the prophetic office.⁷ His supreme authority was authenticated by the anointing of the Holy Spirit:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. This is said, that we may know that Christ both in Himself and in His ministers is not conducting a human or private affair, but is sent to restore the Church's salvation at a prompting of God, for He testifies that He does nothing by human instinct or design, but works all

⁷ *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 1-2 (CO 2:361-363); *Genevan Catechism* (CO 6:19-22) LCC XXII 95-6.

things by the direction of the Spirit of God, that the faith of the godly may be established on the authority and might of God.⁸

This anointing of the Holy Spirit marked Christ off from any other human authority and witnessed His heavenly origin. When this exclusive authority is fully respected, the office is also extended to believers in the same power of the Spirit:

We see that he was anointed by the Spirit to be herald and witness of the Father's grace. And that not in the common way – for he is distinguished from other teachers with a similar office. On the other hand, we must note this: he received anointing, not only for himself that he might carry out the office of teaching, but for his whole body that the power of the Spirit might be present in the continuing preaching of the gospel.⁹

ii. Kingly Office

Victory and security over sin, evil, death and hell is the major benefit brought forth by Christ's kingly office. For Calvin, this kingship can be understood in both corporate and individual senses. Corporately, Christ is the eternal king of the whole faith community. He is the eternal defender and protector of the church throughout all the history. Therefore, we can be sure that no oppression can finally overthrow the church.¹⁰ Individually, Christ is the king of each of us. He shares with us his riches of spiritual gifts so that we have the guarantee of the final victory over death into eternal life.¹¹

⁸ Comm.on Luke 4:18 (*CO* 45:141) *CCNT* 147-8.

⁹ *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 2 (*CO* 2:362).

¹⁰ It is to be noted that Calvin appeals to the eternal decree of God as the foundation of this assurance: "Here he [David] asserts that, no matter how many strong enemies plot to overthrow the church, they do not have sufficient strength to prevail over God's immutable decree by which he appointed his Son eternal King." *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 3 (*CO* 2:363).

¹¹ *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 3 (*CO* 2:363-364). *Genevan Catechism* (*CO* 6:21-22) *LCC* XXII 95-6.

Obviously, Christ is also the consummation of the kingly office. All power has now been concentrated in Christ, so that He, taking up *medius gradus*, can lead us little by little to a firm union with God.¹² Again, this exclusive authority of Christ's office does not undermine its "for us" nature. In 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin wrote that "by this anointing [of the Holy Spirit] he [Christ] was appointed king by the Father to subject all power in heaven and on earth (Ps. 2:1-6), that in him we might be kings, having sway over the devil, sin, death and hell".¹³ The parallel between Christ and us cannot be stated in a bolder way. Christ's sharing with us His power, magnificence and wealth in the Spirit is exactly how He carries out His ruling. Calvin basically held this pneumatological understanding of the kingly office for the rest of his life, although, in his later writings, he became more cautious to avoid directly ascribing the title "kings" to believers.¹⁴ In

¹² *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 5 (*CO* 2:365).

¹³ *Inst.* (1536) 54 (*CO* 1:69).

¹⁴ In the 1539 *Institutes*, Calvin writes, "Paucis verbis notatum habemus discrimen inter unctionem salvatoris et nostram: quod illum Dominus toto spiritualium opum thesauro citra mensuram locupletavit, cuius suam unicuique nostrum portionem demetitur; quod spiritum, quantus quantus est, in illo residere voluit, ut ex illo velut ex scaturigine quadam ad nos exuberaret: ut ita de eius plenitudine hauriamus omnes (Ioan. 1, 16), et illius consortes facti spiritus sancti gratias in illo participemus." *Inst.* (1539) c.4 (*CO* 1:515); and "Deinde talis illi est regnandi ratio, ut non tam sibi regnet quam nobis. Potentia enim sua nos armat et instruit, decore et magnificentia ornat, opibus locupletat, denique in regni participationem exaltat et evehit. Siquidem eius communionis qua se nobis illigavit beneficio, reges et ipsi constituimur, robore eius ad certamen cum diabolo, peccato et morte depugnandum armati, iustitiae eius ornamentis ad spem immortalitatis vestiti, divitiis sanctitatis eius ad fructificandum Deo per bona opera locupletati." *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (*CO* 1:515). This text had been retained in the subsequent editions, until it was modified in the 1559 edition as: "Unde colligimus ipsum nobis magis regnare quam sibi, idque intus et extra: ut scilicet donis spiritus, quibus naturaliter vacui sumus, quatenus expedire novit Deus, referti, ex iis primitiis sentiamus vere nos Deo coniunctos esse ad perfectam beatitudinem. Deinde ut eiusdem spiritus virtute freti non dubitemus contra diabolum, mundum, et quodvis noxae genus nos semper fore victores. ... Quia talis est est regnandi ratio ut communicet nobiscum quidquid accepit a patre. Iam quia nos potentia sua armat et instruit, decore et magnificentia ornat, opibus locupletat: hinc nobis suppetit uberrima gloriandi materia, atque etiam fiducia suggeritur, ut intrepide certemus cum diabolo, peccato et morte. Denique ut iustitia eius vestiti omnia mundi opprobria fortiter superemus, et sicut ipse suis donis liberaliter nos replet, ita nos vicissim fructus in eius gloriam proferamus." *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 4 (*CO* 2:364-365).

contrast with the observable but fleeting nature of earthly kingdom, the kingdom of Christ is spiritual in nature.¹⁵ Christ rules with eternal authority, but it is not known by the world because it “lies in the Spirit”.¹⁶ Correspondingly, the dignity, confidence and hope of believers, which derive from Christ’s kingly authority, cannot be measured by visible prosperity or physical wellbeing. One needs the secret work of the Holy Spirit to look beyond this veil of lowliness and discern the heavenly hope and protection in Christ.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 3 (*CO* 2:363) “It would be pointless to speak of this [kingship] without first warning my readers that it is spiritual in nature”; II, 15, 4 (*CO* 2:364) “We have said that we can perceive the force and usefulness of Christ’s kingship only when we recognize it to be spiritual” and “This he did to prevent those otherwise too much inclined to things earthly from indulging in foolish dreams of pomp. These words briefly teach us what Christ’s Kingdom confers upon us. For since it is not earthly or carnal and hence subject to corruption, but spiritual, it lifts us up even to eternal life.” Also *Genevan Catechism* (*CO* 6:19-20) *LCC* XXII 95: “M: But what kind of kingdom is it you mention? C: A spiritual kingdom, contained in the Word and Spirit of God, which carry with them righteousness and life.”

¹⁶ *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 5 (*CO* 2:365).

¹⁷ *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 3 (*CO* 2:364) “Therefore Christ, to lift our hope to heaven, declares that his ‘kingship is not of this world’ (John 18:36). In short, when any one of us hears that Christ’s kingship is spiritual, aroused by this word let him attain to the hope of a better life; and since it is now protected by Christ’s hand, let him await the full fruit of this grace in the age to come.” We will discuss the relation between the hiddenness of Christ’s kingdom and the secret work of the Holy Spirit more fully in a later chapter. For the time being, we would like to see how this office was executed in the virtue of the Holy Spirit. Regarding Christ’s kingship, Zachman argues, “It is clear that Calvin considers Christ as Lord primarily in terms of his humanity.” His argument is substantiated by a quotation from Calvin’s comment on 1 Cor. 15:27 “Of course we acknowledge that God is the Ruler, but His rule is actualized in the man Christ [sed in facie hominis Christi].” R. C. Zachman, “Jesus Christ as the Image of God in Calvin’s Theology,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 25 (1990) 55. However, according to Calvin, 1 Cor. 15:24-28 is a classic example of those passages which speak “neither of deity nor of humanity alone, but of both at once”, and he always reminded us “those things which apply to the office of the Mediator are not spoken simply of the divine nature or of the human.” *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 3 (*CO* 2:354). The purpose of the text quoted by Zachman is not to ascribe the kingship primarily to Christ’s humanity, but to point out that the kingship which Christ is now exercising is an accommodated and thus temporary ruling of God through the mediation (i.e. kingship of God manifested in the flesh). This understanding is in better agreement with his overall teachings: “And the name ‘Lord’ exclusively belongs to the person of Christ only in so far as it takes an intermediate rank between God and us.” *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 3 (*CO* 2:355); “The Father has given all power to the Son that he may by the Son’s hand govern, nourish, and sustain us, keep us in his care, and help us. ... For God mediately, so to speak, wills to rule and protect the church in Christ’s person.” II, 15, 5 (*CO* 2:365).

iii. Priestly Office

Through the anointing with the Holy Spirit, Christ was also appointed to be our High Priest.¹⁸ For Calvin, the priestly system in the Old Testament time is only the shadow of the reality in Christ.¹⁹ However, this shadow did illuminate the nature of Christ's works. According to God's ordinances, the priests came from the people and represented them before God. They stood as the mediators and advocates between God and God's people, appeasing God by offering satisfactions for the sins of the people as well as themselves. In like manner, the Son came as a human being so that He could stand in our midst and represent us. He also performed the task of propitiation according to the eternal law of reconciliation, i.e. appeasing God by offering satisfactions for our sins.²⁰ However, Christ excelled all the previous priests in several ways. First of all, all previous priests should offer satisfaction for their own sins, whereas Christ alone is sinless. Secondly, they were commanded to offer animals as sacrifices whereas Christ was both priest and sacrifice, for there is no other satisfaction adequate for our sins and there is no other person who is worthy to offer the only-begotten Son. Thirdly, the priests had to offer periodically and their death brought their office to an end, whereas Christ's offering was

¹⁸ Zachman proposes, "If the office of king has to do with the actual bestowal of every spiritual good, the office of priest has to do with the removal of every spiritual evil." Zachman 55. Such a clear differentiation of office cannot be observed in Calvin's writings. In fact, the expiatory and propitiatory works of the priest are also the acquisition of spiritual good; and the consecration of the believers by the priest includes their sanctification which was fulfilled through communicating the spiritual gifts.

¹⁹ Comm. on Heb. 7:15 (*CO* 55:90) *CCNT* 97-8: "We know how Aaron and his sons were initiated. What was fulfilled in Christ by the hidden, heavenly power of the Spirit was in His case foreshadowed by oil, by various vestments, by the sprinkling of blood, and by other earthly rites." Also Comm. on Heb. 8:5 (*CO* 55:98) *CCNT* 106-7: "In short he is saying that the true worship of God does not consist in legal ceremony, and that hence the Levitical priests in exercising their function have only a shadow and a second-hand copy which is inferior to the original. That is the meaning of the word ὑπόδειγμα."

²⁰ *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 6 (*CO* 2:367).

once for all and the resurrection and ascension of Christ ruled out the need of successors.²¹ In the next section, we will see how this unique atoning act was actually fulfilled through the eternal Spirit.

As before, Calvin's understanding of the priestly office consists of two aspects: first, its consummation in Christ; secondly, its derived function in the New Testament church. The immediate rival of the first aspect was the practice of mass, as well as the underlying sacramental system, of the Roman Church in his time.²² The Reformation axiom *solus Christus* did not allow a complete parallel between Christ and us. As far as the atoning effect was concerned, Christ's unique offering excluded any possibility of repetition. However, there is another aspect of this offering which invites repetition and leads to the second aspect of priestly office:

It is because He consecrated Himself to the Father that His holiness might come to us. For as the blessing is spread to the whole harvest from the first-fruits, so God's Spirit cleanses us by the holiness of Christ and makes us partakers of it. And not by imputation alone, for in that respect He is said to have been made to us righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30); but He is also said to have been made to us sanctification, because He has, so to say, presented us to His Father in His own person that we may be renewed to true holiness by His Spirit. Although this sanctification belongs to the whole life of Christ, it shone brightest in the sacrifice of His death; for then He appeared as the true High Priest who consecrated the Temple, the altar, all the vessels and the people by the power of His Spirit.²³

²¹ Comm. on Heb. 7:25-26 (CO 55:93-95); 9:11-12 (CO 55:109-110); 9:25 (CO 55:118); 10:19 (CO 55:128-129).

²² In his commentary on Hebrews, Calvin seized every chance to emphasise "Christ alone" is our real priest as well as the source of expiation, and thus attacked the Roman practice as Antichrist.

²³ Comm. on John 17:19 (CO 47:385) CCNT 146. Also, Comm. on Heb. 13:15 (CO 55:192-193) CCNT 211: "Hence arose the question whether any sacrifices remained for Christians, for this would be absurd since they were ordained to serve the worship of God. The apostle meets this timeously, and says that another form of sacrifice is left for us which is no less pleasing to God, namely the offering to Him of the calves of our lips, as the prophet Hosea says (14.3). The sacrifice of praise is not only equally pleasing to

Therefore, the offering of Christ is at the same time an act of consecration. By sharing with us the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ incorporates us into His own consecration for the service of God, just as in the Old Testament time the High Priest through the rite of consecration set apart the altar, all the vessels as well as the people for the service of God. Appropriating the efficacy of the “exclusive” atoning function, this “inclusive” consecrating function encourages believers to offer themselves and their all to God for His service:

Now, Christ plays the priestly role, not only to render the Father favorable and propitious toward us by an eternal law of reconciliation, but also to receive us as his companions in this great office (Rev. 1:6). For we who are defiled in ourselves, yet are priests in him, offer ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary that the sacrifices of prayers and praise that we bring may be acceptable and sweet-smelling before God.²⁴

. In short, along with the threefold of Christ, we can always see the corresponding office and work of the Holy Spirit. He functions as a bridge between the fulfilled works

God but more so than all the outward things that were used under the Law, as clearly appears from Ps. 50. There God rejects all these things as of no account, and orders the sacrifice of praise to be offered to Him. ... As it is the apostle’s plan to tell us what is the proper way of worshipping God under the New Testament he reminds us in passing that we cannot honestly call on God and glorify His name except through Christ as our Mediator. It is He alone who hallows our lips which are otherwise defiled to sing the praises of God, who opens the way for our prayers, who in short performs the office of Priest by standing before God in our name.” And *Inst.* (1559) II, 15,6 (CO 2:367): “Hence arises not only trust in prayer, but also peace for godly consciences, while they safely lean upon God’s fatherly mercy and are surely persuaded that whatever has been consecrated through the Mediator is pleasing to God.”

²⁴ *Inst.* (1559) II, 15, 6 (CO 2:367). Also, *Inst.* (1536) 54 (CO 1:69), “Then we believe that he was appointed priest, by his self-sacrifice to placate the Father and reconcile him to us, that in him we might be priests, with him as our Intercessor and Mediator, offering our prayers, our thanks, ourselves, and our all to the Father.” *Genevan Catechism* (CO 6:21-22) LCC XXII 96 “M: What is the purpose of his priestly office? C: First, that on this ground he is our mediator, who reconciles us to the Father. Then too, because through him there is opened up for us a way to the Father, so that with boldness we may come into his presence, and ourselves also offer in sacrifice to him ourselves and all we have. And in this way he makes us his colleagues in the priesthood.”

of Christ and their actualisation in the life of believers. We will discuss the former in the rest of this chapter and reserve the latter for later chapters.

II. Christ's Acquisition of Salvation and the Work of the Holy Spirit

In the previous section, we have had an overall idea of how Christ's mediatorial office and works, in terms of the threefold office, are related to the anointing of the Spirit. In this section, we will highlight several important events in Christ's earthly ministry to see how the Mediator actually acquired salvation for us in the power of the Holy Spirit. Special attention will be paid to the relation between Christ's humanity and the work of the Holy Spirit.

i. Nativity of Christ

For Calvin, Christ's birth was not a trivial entry point for His subsequent redemptive works, but itself was an obedient response to the will of the Father. Christ as the eternal Word shares the highest glory, honour and power with the Father. However, He was so willingly obedient to the sending of the Father that He humbled Himself in the form of a servant, i.e. clothing Himself with our flesh.²⁵ Regarding this humanity, Calvin wrote:

Just as He had to be true man to expiate our sins and death, and overcome Satan in our flesh, all in all to be the true Mediator, so it was necessary for Him, in order to cleanse others, to be clear of all uncleanness or spot.²⁶

²⁵ For Calvin, humbling does not imply any lessening of this glory, but simply its being concealed. See Comm. on Phil. 2:6-11 (CO 52:24-30).

²⁶ Comm. on Luke 1:35 (CO 45:31) CCNT 29.

Therefore, in order to be suitable for the redemptive ministry, Christ's humanity, which was assumed from the seed of Mary, should be the same as ours, and yet retain its sinless integrity from the very outset. But how could Calvin resolve the tension between the solidarity and the utter difference between Christ and us? His solution is to invoke the distinction between created nature and the accidental quality of corruption (or sanctification in the case of Jesus):

For we make Christ free of all stain not just because he was begotten of his mother without copulation with man, but because he was sanctified by the Spirit that the generation might be pure and undefiled as would have been true before Adam's fall [*sed quia sanctificatus est a spiritu, ut pura esset generatio et integra, qualis futura erat ante Adae lapsum*]. ... Nor do we imagine that Adam's seed is twofold, even though no infection came to Christ. For the generation of man is not unclean and vicious of itself, but is so as an accidental quality arising from the Fall [*quia hominis generatio per se immunda aut vitiosa non est, sed accidentalis ex lapsu*]. No wonder, then, that Christ, through whom integrity was to be restored, was exempted from common corruption!²⁷

Therefore, Calvin rejected the notion that the virgin conception, i.e. the lack of human copulation, was the source of the purity of Christ's humanity. Indeed, the generation itself as a created nature (i.e. at the level of essence or nature) is good and not vicious. Its purity or impurity depends on what actually took place at the level of quality. After the Fall, a vicious quality came in and the generation of the whole human race was thus polluted. But Christ was exempted from this common corruption, in that the Holy Spirit sanctified His generation with a pure quality and fortified it from any defilement. For

²⁷ *Inst.* (1559) II, 13, 4 (CO 2:352). Strictly speaking, the Latin text does not read "accidental quality" but simply "accidental". But, with reference to II, 1, 11, what is "accidentalis" to the human generation is no doubt referring to an adventitious quality in contrast with a substantial property of humanity.

Calvin, the separation of Christ's humanity from ours is as important as its solidarity with ours:

Thus though Christ was born of the seed of Abraham, He drew no contagion from that blemished nature, for from the very first, God's Spirit kept Him pure, not merely that He should abound in holiness unto Himself alone, but rather that He should make others holy. The very mode of His conception testifies that He was set apart from sinners to be our Mediator.²⁸

The uniquely sinless humanity on the one hand was the necessary ground for Christ to live a holy life commensurate with his redemptive mission; on the other hand, it functioned as a channel to impart the sanctifying effect of the Spirit.

ii. Baptism of Christ

The reason why Christ received baptism can be found from His own saying: "to fulfil all righteousness". For Calvin, righteousness here should be understood as obedience to the laws. Christ willingly subjected Himself to the laws in every aspect so as to render full obedience to the Father.²⁹ Calvin recognised that as regards Christ's humanity there should be some special provision from the Holy Spirit:

For though He always directed His prayers to the benefit of others, yet He had, insofar as His humanity required it, need of the defence of the Spirit's unique power, in embarking on such a rigorous campaign.³⁰

But as the Spirit had formerly dwelt in Christ, why did He descend visibly upon Christ at this very moment? Calvin explained:

²⁸ Comm. on Luke 1:35 (*CO* 45:31-32) *CCNT* 29.

²⁹ Comm. on Matt. 3:13 (*CO* 45:125) *CCNT* 130.

³⁰ Comm. on Matt. 3:16 (*CO* 45:126) *CCNT* 131.

Though there was ever an amazing outpouring of the unique grace of the Spirit upon Christ, yet He contained Himself at home as a private individual right up to the time that He was to be brought out by the Father. So now, in the fulness of time, to equip Him for the fulfilment of the office of Redeemer, He is endowed with a new power of the Spirit, and this not so much for His own sake, as for others [*Ergo nunc, dum adest maturum tempus, quo se ad praestandum redemptoris munus accingat, nova spiritus virtute induitur, idque non tam sua quam aliorum causa*]. And this is deliberately done to teach the faithful to receive and embrace with reverence His divine power, and not treat the weakness of His flesh with scorn. ... Thus John sees the Holy Spirit descending upon Christ, to teach us that there is nothing carnal or earthly to be looked for in Christ as such, but rather He comes forth from heaven as a divine man, in whom the power of the Holy Spirit reigns [*Apparet ergo spiritus sanctus Ioanni super Christum descendens, qui admoneat, nihil in ipso Christo carnale vel terrenum esse quaerendum, sed quasi divinum hominem e coelo prodire, in quo regnat virtus spiritus sancti*].³¹

For we know that He remained hidden like a private individual for thirty years, because the time of His manifestation was not yet come. But when He wished to make Himself known to the world, He began with Baptism. He therefore received the Spirit on that occasion not so much for Himself as for His people. And the Spirit descended visibly that we may know that in Christ dwells the abundance of all gifts of which we are destitute and empty [*Tunc ergo non tam sibi, quam suis accepit spiritum: atque ideo visibilis fuit descensus ille, ut sciamus in eo residere donorum omnium copiam, quorum inopes et vacui sumus*].³²

³¹ *ibid.* For the last clause “in quo regnat virtus spiritus sancti”, we prefer the older translation to Morrison’s “under the royal power of the Holy Spirit”.

³² Comm. on John 1:32 (CO 47:28) CCNT 35. Also, the audible voice from the heaven has similar purpose: “Further, Christ was presented to us by the Father with this proclamation, in His coming forth to fulfil His task of Mediation, that we might rely on this pledge of our adoption and without fear call God Himself our Father. The title of Son truly and by nature belongs to Christ alone, yet He was revealed as Son of God in our flesh, that He who alone claimed Him as Father by right, could win Him for us also. So God, in introducing our Mediator with words that praise Him as the Son, declares Himself to be a Father to us all. This is exactly the aim of the word *beloved*, for as in ourselves we are hateful to God, His fatherly love must flow to us in Christ.” Comm. on Matt. 3:17 (CO 45:127) CCNT 132. Regarding the title “beloved Son”, Calvin emphasised that, like all other works of the Mediator, it was granted for our sake, rather than for Jesus himself. He adamantly refused any suggestion which might bypass the office of the Mediator: “Therefore that subtlety as to how the Father always loved Himself in the Son has nothing to do with this passage. The love mentioned here must be referred to us, because Christ declares that the Father loves Him as the Head of the Church – a thing extremely necessary for us. For he who seeks to be loved by God without the Mediator gets imbrangled in a labyrinth in which he will find neither the right path nor the way out. We should therefore direct our gaze to Christ, in whom will be found the pledge of the divine love. For the love of God was poured out on Him completely, that it might flow from Him to His members. He was marked out by this title, that He was the beloved Son in whom the Father’s will is satisfied. But we must notice the end – that in Him God may look upon us as pleasing. Thus in Him, as in a mirror, we may behold God’s fatherly love towards us all, since He is not loved separately, or for His own private advantage, but that He may unite us along with Himself to the Father.” Comm. on John 15:9 (CO 47:342) CCNT 97. This emphasis on the office and its corresponding benefits *ad extra*, rather than on

In other words, the purpose of the visible descent of the Holy Spirit was to overcome the veiling of Christ's divinity by His humanity, so that believers can look beyond it to recognise the real identity of Christ as well as the spiritual gifts in him.³³ We can say that, both within and without the person of the Mediator, the work of Holy Spirit was to remedy the weakness of the humanity so that the office of the Mediator could be fulfilled or identified.

iii. Temptation of Christ

Christ's public office was further prepared by the Spirit's leading Christ into the wilderness, in which two incidents took place, namely Christ's fasting and being tempted. As for the fasting, Calvin refused to ascribe any intrinsic virtue to the abstinence from food. In this respect, there was absolutely nothing for Christ's humanity to achieve or contribute. It was God who relieved His body from the necessity of eating. In so doing,

the ontological constitution *in se*, can also be observed in the polemic against Osiander's "essential righteousness".

³³ The same purpose can be found in Jesus' miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit: "For the power in which Christ excelled, was from no other source but the Spirit. Therefore when the heavenly Father anointed His Son, He equipped Him with the power of His own Spirit. Peter immediately goes on to say that this power appeared in miracles, even if he expressly mentions one kind, that Christ testified that He was endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit so that He might do good to the world. ... *For God was with him*. Peter gives a brief indication of the purpose to which the powers put forth by the hand of Christ tended, viz. to bring men, who were seeing God as if He were present, to have faith in Christ. And this was the true value of miracles ... Accordingly, seeing that His powers made it plain that Christ came forth from heaven, His authority is placed beyond the chance decision of human judgment." Comm. on Acts 10:38 (CO 48:245-246) CCNT 311-2. Similar thought can be observed in this passage: "Christ now leaves His defence of this case and explains the purpose and use of the miracle as a means whereby He might be known as the Son of God. For in all His deeds and words His purpose was to show that He was the author of salvation. What He claims for Himself now pertains to His divinity – in the words of the apostle, 'he upholds all things by his powerful will' (Heb. 1.3). And the reason why He declares He is God is that He, manifested in the flesh, might execute the office of the Christ. Thus He affirms that He came from heaven, chiefly because He wants it known why He came down to earth." Comm. on John 5:17 (CO 47:111-112) CCNT 124.

God granted us a seal, so that we can be sure that He appointed Christ to the office of the Gospel.³⁴ As for the temptation, Calvin explained that “only after He [Christ] had been tested by temptations, after an apprenticeship [*tirocinio*], would He be equipped for such an arduous and distinguished mission”.³⁵ Backed by his understanding of Christ’s baptism, we may reasonably suppose that for Calvin this “apprenticeship” was needed owing to the weakness of Christ’s humanity. Temptation was exactly an attack on this weakness, driving it to rebel against God. Here, Calvin was well aware of the tension between the reality of Christ’s human weakness and that of His sinlessness:

But at first sight it seems odd that Christ should be liable to the devil’s temptations, as for temptation to strike a man, there must be underlying fault and weakness. This is the answer - first, that Christ took on our weaknesses, but without fault [*susceptas a Christo fuisse nostras infirmitates, sed absque vitio*], and second, that it was no more loss to His glory to become exposed to temptations, than to put on Himself our flesh. On these terms He was made man, that He took up our affections together with the flesh [*ut affectus nostros una cum carne susciperet*]. All the difficulty comes in the first phrase. How could Christ have been encumbered with our weakness to the extent of lying open to the temptations of Satan, and yet remain pure and untouched by any fault? ... Now it is rightly considered a weakness of human nature, that our senses are stirred by objects presented to them, but in itself there would be no fault in this, if corruption did not find an entrance [*Atque haec merito censetur naturae humanae infirmitas, sensus moveri rebus obiectis: sed quae per se vitiosa non esset, nisi accederet corruptio*], with the result that Satan never approaches us without striking some wounding blow, or at least pricking us with some hurt. In this area, Christ’s integrity [*naturae integritas*] separated

³⁴ Comm. on Matt. 4:1 (CO 45:128-129) CCNT 134-135: “Christ did not abstain from food and drink to give an example of temperance, but to gain Him more authority in being set apart from the common lot of men, that He might progress as an angel from heaven, not as a man of the earth. ... So it is really quite foolish to institute the so-called forty-day fast in imitation of Christ. ... Moreover, it is insult to Christ, for they tear down His trophy, and dress themselves in His spoils, and then, to the Gospel, which loses no mean authority if Christ’s fast is not recognized as His own seal. God worked a great miracle when He released His Son from the necessity of eating. It is surely mad audacity to rival God, and attempt the same by one’s own efforts. Fasting brought Christ the distinction of divine glory. Is He not robbed of His glory and brought down to the ranks, when all mortals squeeze themselves in along-side Him? Did God not set the object of this fast of Christ as the seal of His approval on the Gospel?”

³⁵ *ibid.* (CO 45:128) CCNT 133. For the word “*tirocinio*”, we prefer the translation “apprenticeship” to Morrison’s “preliminary training”.

Him from us; though we ought not imagine in Him a certain intermediate condition, which was in Adam, to whom it was given only to be able not to sin [*quanquam non media quaedam in eo conditio imaginanda est, qualis fuit in Adam, cui tantum datum fuerat, posse non peccare*]. But we do know that Christ was so fortified by the power of the Spirit that Satan's darts could not pierce Him [*ea spiritus virtute munitum fuisse Christum, ut Satanae telis penetrabilis non esset*].³⁶

In order to do justice to both realities (i.e. human weakness and sinlessness), Calvin, as in the case of virgin conception, employed the distinction between a created nature and a spiritual quality. As a created nature, human senses or affections as such, though being weak, were not regarded as vicious and were really assumed by Christ. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit was preserving its pure quality all through Christ's earthly ministry, as He had kept it from any corruption at its very commencement. It is to be noted that this constant fortification of the Holy Spirit was so strong that the freedom of Christ's humanity even excelled that of Adam's before the Fall, i.e. *posse non peccare*. Following the Augustinian terminology employed by Calvin, we should say that Christ's human nature, from its conception onwards, was always kept in the eschatological freedom of *non posse peccare*. Although Christ shared our weakness in senses or affections, his fortified soul was so different from ours that no inordinate desire was aroused in the temptations:

This objection soon disappears – there is nothing impossible in God allowing, and in Christ freely undergoing it, as long as we do not imagine Christ to have in any way suffered inwardly, that is, in His mind and soul [*modo ne intus, hoc est, in mente et anima, quidquam putemus passum fuisse*].³⁷

³⁶ Comm. on Matt. 4:1 (CO 45:130-131) CCNT 136. We change the translation of “media conditio” from “state as a mere average” to “intermediate condition”, and “posse non peccare” from “possibility of not sinning” to “to be able not to sin”.

³⁷ Comm. on Matt. 4:5 (CO 45:133) CCNT 139-140. We change the translation of “passum” from “affected” to “suffered”. The context suggests that Calvin means that Christ's soul and mind were not suffered from inordinate passion.

Also, His senses were affected and beguiled by the presentation of the kingdoms in their glory in such a manner that no inward desire impressed itself on His soul [*Deinde sic tactos et illectos fuissse eius sensus, obiecta regnorum gloria, ut nulla intus cupiditas animum eius pupugerit*] – compared with the lusts of the flesh [*carnis libidines*], which like wild beasts are caught up by the objects that attract us, and pull us along with them: for Christ had the same sense with us, but not our unruly appetites [*nam Christus communem habuit nobiscum sensum, non autem appetitus incompositos*].³⁸

Therefore, while Calvin formally regarded the temptation as an “apprenticeship” for Christ, its training was basically confined to His human senses or affections. The main thrust of apprenticeship fell on the side of believers:

Surely, it was for this cause that the Son of God suffered to be tempted, that He might intervene for us, whenever Satan brings any trial of temptation across our path. So we do not read of His being tempted, when He was running His own life at home, but when He had to enter on the career of the Redeemer, then He descended into the arena in the name of His whole Church. But if Christ was tempted as the Representative of all the faithful, we should realize that the temptations that strike us are not fortuitous, or the turn of Satan’s whim, without God’s permission, but that the Spirit of God presides in all our trials, that our faith may be the better tried.³⁹

³⁸ Comm. on Matt. 4:8 (CO 45:135) CCNT 141-2. We change the translation of “intus cupiditas” from “covetous affection” to “inward passion”, “animum eius” from “His being” to “His soul”, “libidines” from “desires” to “lusts”, “sensus” from “emotion” to “sense”. See also Comm. on John 13:21 (CO 25:314) CCNT 65: “I [Calvin] readily acknowledge that all Christ’s affections were guided by the Spirit.”

³⁹ Comm. on Matt. 4:1 (CO 45:130) CCNT 135. Also, Comm. on Heb. 2:17 (CO 55:34) CCNT 33: “He [the apostle] goes on to teach that Christ was made subject to our human passions ‘that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest’. ... In a priest, whose office it is to appease the anger of God, to help the unfortunate, to restore the fallen, to relieve the oppressed, the first and foremost requirement is mercy, such as a sense of fellowship creates in us. It is rare for those who are always fortunate to be touched by the struggles of others. ... It was not because the Son of God needed to experience it to become accustomed to the emotion of mercy, but because He could not persuade us that He is kind and ready to help us, unless He had been tested by our misfortunes: and this like other things He has given us.” And Comm. on Heb. 4:15 (CO 55:54) CCNT 55: “He takes *likeness* to be that of our nature, by which he means that Christ has put on our feelings along with our flesh, not only to show Himself to be truly man, but to be taught by that very experience how to help our miseries; and that, not because as Son of God He needed such instruction, but because only thus could we grasp the concern He has for our salvation.” See also Comm. on Matt. 4:4, 4:6, 4:8 (CO 45:132,134-136).

For Calvin, Christ accommodated Himself in the temptations to our condition so as to assure us that we are not in want of God's providence even when we are tried by all kinds of temptations. His solidarity with us in the battles of temptations, as well as His victory over them, guarantees us that "fortified with the same armour [*iisdem armis muniti*], we have no doubt that we have the palm of victory in our grasp".⁴⁰ For Calvin, this armour is the power of the Holy Spirit, with which Christ's humanity (and subsequently ours as well) was elevated to the eschatological freedom of *non posse peccare*.⁴¹

iv. Suffering of Christ

Although Calvin recognised that Christ began to pay the price of our redemption from the time of incarnation, the high time of the salvation was still His suffering and death.⁴² When Christ wrestled with the dread of death and trusted the Father in the extreme adversity, he manifested to us his willing obedience to the Father as well as his incomparable love towards us.

With regard to Christ's suffering, Calvin emphasised that it was an essential part of our redemption. Christ's humanity like ours did feel the sorrow and dread of death.

⁴⁰ Comm. on Matt. 4:4 (CO 45:131) CCNT 137. For clarity, we modify the translation accordingly.

⁴¹ This does not mean that we are able to lead a completely sinless life in the present age. In the 1543 treatise against Pighius, Calvin clarified that what believers enjoy in the present life is the first taste of this eschatological freedom. Although it is not yet granted in its fullness, they really enjoy the "real thing" so that they can have the confidence to persevere unto the end. We will return to this matter in chapter 7.

⁴² *Inst.* (1559) II, 16, 5 (CO 2:371) "In short, from the time when he took on the form of a servant, he began to pay the price of liberation in order to redeem us. Yet to define the way of salvation more exactly, Scripture ascribes this as peculiar and proper to Christ's death." and "For this reason the so-called 'Apostles' Creed' passes at once in the best order from the birth of Christ to his death and resurrection, wherein the whole of perfect salvation consists."

However, Christ's sorrow and fear was even more intense, because it arose not so much from the fear of physical death as from the wrath of God against the sins of the whole world. In other words, Christ in his suffering, standing in our place, took up the punishment of our souls. So if we denied the reality of this sorrow and fear, we would at the same time deny the redemption of our souls and Christ "would have been the Redeemer of bodies alone".⁴³ Calvin wholeheartedly defended this conviction in his exposition of Christ's prayers in Gethsemane.

Before Christ was arrested and executed on the cross, he brought his disciples with him to Gethsemane. There Christ was deeply tormented by sorrow and fervently prayed to the Father. As in the exposition of the temptation, Calvin based the possibility of this sorrow on the common human affection that Christ shared with us. Lest the reality of this sorrow were doubted, Calvin even proposed that "the divine power of his Spirit remained hidden for a moment to give place to weakness of flesh".⁴⁴ However, this assertion cannot be understood as a total cessation of the Spirit's influence upon Christ's flesh:

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem. From this we perceive that Christ was equipped by a divine fortitude to conquer the terrors of death [*divina fortitudine instructum fuisse Christum ad vincendos mortis terrores*], for knowingly and willingly [*sciens et volens*] He hastens to submit to it. For

⁴³ *Inst.* (1559) II, 16,5-12 (CO 2:370-379); especially in II, 16, 10 (CO 2:376-377), Calvin interpreted "Descended into hell" in the Apostles' Creed as the spiritual suffering for us before God's wrath.

⁴⁴ *Inst.* (1559) II, 16, 12 (CO 2:379). Also Comm. on Matt. 26:37 (CO 45:719) CCNT 147-8: "When the divine power of Christ is said to have reposed as it were in concealment for a time to allow Him to fulfil the Redeemer's role of suffering, this is so far from being an absurdity, that the mystery of our salvation could not have been fulfilled otherwise." and Comm. on Matt. 27:46 (CO 45:779) CCNT 208: "We have said in another place how the Godhead yielded to the infirmity of the flesh, in the interests of our salvation, that Christ might fulfil the whole role of Redeemer."

why, without coercion, does He take the path to a horrible slaughter save because the unconquerable power of the Spirit subdued His fear and raised Him above all human feelings [*nisi quia eum invicta spiritus virtus, subacto metu, supra omnes humanos affectus extulerat*]?⁴⁵

. Throughout the event, the Holy Spirit imparted fortitude to the human nature, especially the human mind and will, so that it could be obedient to God and achieve the victory. As we have mentioned before, the common human weakness of Christ was chiefly ascribed to human senses or affections. But even for this, Calvin would never forget to remind us of its difference from ours:

Yet the weakness of the flesh which Christ took on Himself must be separated from ours, for it was very different. None of our feelings are free of sin, for they all exceed the limit and proper moderation. Though Christ was troubled by sadness and fear, yet He did not rebel against God, but remained composed in the true rule of restraint. There is no wonder, since He was innocent and pure of all stain, that the emotion was displayed in Him, although it witnessed to human infirmity, was pure and unsullied. From the corrupt nature of men nothing flows out but trouble and rottenness. So let us keep the distinction; Christ in His fear and grief was weak, but without any spot of sin, while all our emotions, bubbling out to excess, are sinful.⁴⁶

. Therefore, Christ's affections, though being the weaker part of His human nature, were kept pure and regulated within the proper limits of moderation. As in the exposition of the temptations, Calvin tended to maintain a high view of Christ's will and mind that they did not fall prey to any trials or temptations. However, the scriptural text here posed an additional problem to Calvin. Christ's behaviour in Gethsemane was not as "stable" as that during the temptations. Christ at one moment asked God to exempt Him from the death. But at the very next moment, He recalled the request and submitted His will to

⁴⁵ Comm. on Matt. 20:18 (CO 45:551) CCNT 269. We change the translation of "divina fortitudine" from "divine courage" to "divine fortitude".

⁴⁶ Comm. on Matt. 26:37 (CO 45:720) CCNT 148.

God's will. Does it not mean that Christ at one time refused to discharge His office of the Redeemer, which, as He knew pretty well, was the eternal will of the Father? Does it not mean that Christ's affections exceeded the proper limits at the time of the first prayer? Calvin offered two replies to this problem. First, he admitted that there are some indirect disagreements with God's will which are not reckoned as sins. For example, believers may pray that the church can be free from oppression. This desire is proper and right, though it may be God's will to use this trial to train the church. Calvin thought that "prayers may be holy which appear to differ from the will of God, for He does not wish us to ask always with exactness and scruple what He has decreed, but allows us to beg from Him what is desirable according to the capacity of our sense".⁴⁷ In other words, Calvin subtly admitted that the human mind is limited in inquiring the will of God and that this limitation is acceptable to God as long as the desire is right. However, Calvin found that this reply was not entirely satisfactory, for Christ's second prayer was obviously a correction of the first one. If Christ's affection or desire had been regulated properly, why was it to be corrected? Thus came Calvin's second reply, which was also an appeal to the limitation of human mind and will. In His first prayer, Christ was preoccupied by the vehement grief and dread of God's judgement, which "took from Him the immediate recollection of the decree of heaven, so that for a moment He did not think how He was sent to be the Redeemer of the human race".⁴⁸ The darkness of anxiety was

⁴⁷ Comm. on Matt. 26:39 (*CO* 45:723) *CCNT* 151. We change the translation of "quod pro sensus nostri captu optabile est" from "what our intelligence can grasp as desirable" to "what is desirable according to the capacity of our sense".

⁴⁸ *ibid.* (*CO* 45:722) *CCNT* 150. We change the translation of "praesentem ... memoriam" from "present thoughts" to "immediate recollection".

over his mind that He “forgot all else and let forth that cry”.⁴⁹ Calvin thought that “there is no absurdity, if in prayer an immediate attention of everything does not always occur, so as to preserve a distinct order”.⁵⁰ Christ’s subsequent restraint from the desire of escape evidently proved that He, unlike us, managed to hold his affections within the proper bounds. Far from a fault, it was in fact an excellent manifestation of the perfection of Christ’s human will, i.e. a will distinct from but perfectly adapted to God’s will:

In us, all the emotions of the flesh seethe and leap up boldly – or at least drag up some dirt with them. Yet Christ’s passion of grief and fear was such that He held Himself in limits. As various musical sounds, different from each other, make no discord but compose a tuneful and sweet harmony, so in Christ there exists a remarkable example of balance between the wills of God and of man; they differ from each other without conflict or contradiction.⁵¹

So even when the scriptural text posed an acute challenge to his exposition, Calvin spared no pains to defend the purity and perfection of Christ’s human nature. The reason for the “unstable” behaviour was first sought in the weakness of human affections, and then in the limitation of human mind. “Instability” in this respect should not be reckoned as sinful, for they are created properties of human essence. What really matters is the accidental quality coming to the human nature. For us, it is the wicked quality from the Fall; whereas, for Christ, it is the sanctified and invincible quality from the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁹ *ibid.* (CO 45:723) CCNT 151. Also, (CO 45:722) CCNT 150: “Often heavy anxiety clouds the eyes from seeing everything at once.”

⁵⁰ *ibid.* (CO 23:722) CCNT 150.

⁵¹ *ibid.* (CO 45:723) CCNT 151. Based on this, Calvin continued to refute Monothelitism. For Calvin, the unity and distinctiveness of the two wills, as that of the two natures, is effected in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The same line of argument can also be found in his exposition on Christ's famous cry of dereliction on the cross (Matt. 27:46):

This was His chief conflict, harder than any other agony, that in His anguish He was not given relief by His Father's aid or favour, but made to feel somehow estranged. He did not only offer His body as the price of our reconciliation with God, but also in His soul He bore our due pains: He was truly made the Man of sorrows, as Isaiah says (53.3). ... When the trial came on Christ in this form, that He was now against God and doomed to ruin, He was overcome with dread (which would have been enough to swallow up all mankind a hundred times over) but He came out Victor, by the marvellous power of the Spirit [*ipse autem mirifica spiritus virtute victor emersit*]. It is no fiction or play-acting that prompts His complaint, that He is forsaken by the Father. ... It is an inner sadness of soul, with violent fire, that drives Him to break out in a cry. The redemption He worked out was not for the spectator (as I have just said), but, that He might go surety for us, He truly wished to undergo God's judgment in our place.⁵²

For Calvin, no sound interpretation of the passage should call into question Christ's extreme agony arising from the feeling of being forsaken by God, because that was exactly God's judgment against the sins of the whole world and the office of the Redeemer was to undergo this judgment in our place. But the insistence on the reality of the desperate cry immediately raised a question as to the reality of Christ's constancy in moderation:

Does it seem strange that a voice of despair fell from Christ's lips? The solution is easy. Although the physical senses feared death, faith was firm set in His heart; for by it He saw God present, while He complained of His absence [*quanquam sensus carnis exitium apprehenderet, fixam tamen stetit fide in eius corde, qua Deum praesentem intuitus est, de cuius absentia conqueritur*]. ... We have noted a difference between natural sense and the knowledge of faith: so nothing prevents Christ, as far as ordinary sense dictated, taking thought of His estrangement from God, and at the same time, by faith, realizing that God was on His side [*Discrimen etiam notavimus inter naturae sensum et fidei notitiam: quare nihil obstat, quominus Dei*

⁵² Comm. on Matt. 27:46 (CO 45:779) CCNT 207-8.

alienationem mente conceperit Christus, prout sensus communis dictabat, et simul fide retinuerit Deum sibi esse propitium]. This is quite clear from the two parts of the complaint. Before uttering the temptation, He first says He takes refuge in God as His God, and so with the shield of faith bravely repulses the sort of dereliction that shot at Him from the other side. In this fearful torment His faith was unscathed. Though He laments that He is forsaken, He takes confidence in the close assistance of God.⁵³

Here, Calvin had to resolve the tension between the reality of Christ's desperate cry and His constancy in moderation. Again, his solution was to invoke the distinction between natural sense and spiritual fortitude. In the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ was fortified by the invincible shield of faith. Originating from these two different sources, both the complaint of God's absence and the confidence of God's presence were simultaneously real. Although Calvin tried his best to do justice to the realities of both suffering and moderation, of both natural sense and spiritual fortitude, it is to be noted that priority was after all given to Christ's unwavering moderation and confidence.⁵⁴

v. Death of Christ

When we come to discuss Calvin's understanding of Christ's atoning death, it is to be noted that Calvin himself did not differentiate it clearly from Christ's suffering. For him, Christ's death as a price of our redemption was not merely a physical death, i.e. a separation of the soul from the body, but also a fearful agony of the soul resulting from God's wrathful judgement against our sins. Indeed, the latter was exactly what Calvin

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ By understanding the ups and downs in Gethsemane as a "tuneful and sweet harmony" and the address "My God, my God" as a confession of faith, Calvin tried to assure his reader of Christ's unwavering obedience and confidence towards God.

saw in the clause “He descended into Hell” of the Apostles’ Creed, and its clearest expression was the cry of dereliction, which we have already discussed. So strictly speaking, what we shortly examine is a continuation of the discussion about Christ’s suffering by focusing on the effect of this atoning death, as well as the work of the Holy Spirit in it.

As seen in our discussion of Christ’s priestly office, Calvin adopted the priestly system in the Old Testament to interpret Christ’s death. He regarded Christ as both the High Priest as well as the sacrifice of our redemption. His sacrificial death brings forth both expiatory and cleansing effects. As an expiatory sacrifice, Christ bears the curse due for our sins and discharges all satisfaction, so that He appeases the wrath of God and restores us to grace with Him. As a laver, Christ’s blood also served to wash away our corruption. Calvin also employed other biblical motifs to articulate the same theological content. For instance, he could use the forensic notion. In it, God is regarded as the heavenly Judge who declared the penalty of death on our sins, and Christ voluntarily endured our due penalty so that we could be acquitted before the tribunal of God. Further, he could use the warfare notion. In it, death or devil is regarded as the enemy, who held us captive under its yoke. Christ, in our place, gave Himself voluntarily to its power to deliver us from it. But His death differed from ours, in that He was not overwhelmed by it, but crushed, broke and scattered its whole force. Therefore, his death is actually a liberation from the death.⁵⁵ Basic to all these motifs are the ideas of

⁵⁵ *Inst.* (1559) II, 16, 5-7 (CO 2:370-4); *Genevan Catechism* (CO 6:27-32) LCC XXII 98-100

acquiring righteousness and life by voluntary submission, as well as exchanging merit and penalty through substitution:

The apostles clearly state that he paid the price to redeem us from the penalty of death, “being justified ... by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ ... , whom God put forward as a propitiation through faith which is in his blood” (Rom. 3:24-25). ... From this we infer that we must seek from Christ what the law would give if anyone could fulfill it; or, what is the same thing, that we obtain through Christ’s grace what God promised in the law for our works: “He who will do these things, will live in them” (Lev. 18:5). ... For if righteousness consists in the observance of the law, who will deny that Christ merited favor for us when, by taking that burden upon himself, he reconciled us to God as if we had kept the law? ... What was the purpose of this subjection of Christ to the law but to acquire righteousness for us, undertaking to pay what we could not pay?⁵⁶

Death or mortality is a matter of the human nature. Therefore, this obedience unto death, and thus this acquisition of righteousness, must be accomplished in the flesh of Christ. This sentiment was particularly clear in Calvin’s polemic against Osiander. According to Calvin, Osiander taught that Christ is our righteousness because He is the eternal God and that we are made substantially righteous because Christ actually infuses His divine essence into us.⁵⁷ To refute this teaching, Calvin drew our attention to the crucial place of humanity throughout the acquisition of righteousness:

For even though Christ if he had not been true God could not cleanse our souls by his blood, nor appease his Father by his sacrifice, ..., yet it is certain that he carried out all these acts according to his human nature. For if we ask how we have been justified, Paul answers, “By Christ’s obedience” (Rom.

⁵⁶ *Inst.* (1559) II, 17, 5 (*CO* 2:389-390).

⁵⁷ *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 5. Calvin thought Osiander asserted that “Christ is our righteousness because he is God eternal, the source of righteousness, and the very righteousness of God” (*CO* 2:536) and “we are not justified by the grace of the Mediator alone, nor is righteousness simply or completely offered to us in his person, but that we are made partakers in God’s righteousness when God is united to us in essence” (*CO* 2:536-537). Also in III, 11,8 (*CO* 2:538-539) “But Osiander’s opinion is that , since Christ is God and man, he is made righteousness for us with respect to his divine nature, not his human nature”.

5:19). But did he obey in any other way than when he took upon himself the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7)? From this we conclude that in his flesh, righteousness has been manifested to us.⁵⁸

Therefore, the righteousness acquired by Christ is not simply the essential righteousness according to His divine nature. On the other hand, nor should it be regarded simply as the human righteousness.⁵⁹ This can be seen most clearly in Calvin's polemic against Stancaró, whose position was exactly the opposite of Osiander's, stressing that Christ is our Mediator according to His human nature alone:

for Christ to be our brother, he had to be partaker of our flesh and blood (Heb. 2:17); likewise, in turn, it must be set down that he was endowed with the

⁵⁸ *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 9 (CO 2:539-540).

⁵⁹ Regarding Christ's acquired righteousness, Hart argues, "Calvin discerns a salvific significance in the humanity of the Saviour which makes a nonsense of any attempt to interpret salvation in wholly extrinsic terms. There is, as we shall see, a very real sense in which Christ's humanity, taken up into this personal union *is* the salvation of the human race." T. Hart, "Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in Our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989) 67-84, at 72. Also, with reference to Calvin's polemic against Osiander, he comments, "It is the *human* righteousness of Christ which is given to us in grace, and through which we are enabled to approach the throne of grace." (78). Based on this, Hart asserts that the significance of the humanity should go beyond any notion of instrumentalism in Calvin's thought: "Here we begin to see the salvific significance of the Saviour's humanity for Calvin. Far from being of merely instrumental value, it is indeed the very substance of salvation, 'communion ... being not only in the fruit of Christ's death, but also *in his body* offered for our salvation'." (81). Similar concern is shared by J. B. Torrance, "Calvin was clearly sensitive to the same tendency, and repeatedly argued that Christ is not just the minister and 'instrumental cause', but the matter and substance of our justification and sanctification, for in union with Christ we are given a new human righteousness, the righteousness of Christ." J. B. Torrance, "The Vicarious Humanity and Priesthood of Christ in the Theology of John Calvin," in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Doctor*, W. H. Neuser (ed.) (Kampen: Kok, 1978) 73. We have two questions about this view. First, can we really infer from Calvin's polemic against Osiander that for him Christ's acquired righteousness is human righteousness? If Calvin was hesitant in regarding it simply as divine righteousness, should we not pay equal carefulness on the opposite end? In this respect, Weis observes with an admirable precision: "If this redemptive and justifying activity of Christ be granted, Calvin asserted his readiness to grant that Christ justifies us as both God and man, and that this work is also the common task of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Finally, in the context of these modifying considerations, Calvin conceded the propriety of the statement: 'that righteousness of which Christ makes us partakers with himself is the eternal righteousness of the eternal God.'" J. Weis, "Calvin Versus Osiander on Justification," in *Calvin's Opponents*, Articles on Calvin and Calvinism V. 5, R. C. Gamble (ed.) (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1992) 353-369, at 362. Secondly, did Calvin really go beyond the notion of instrumentalism regarding Christ's humanity, when he taught our communion with Christ in the body offered for our salvation? We will shortly see that Calvin was quite ready to take the body as a channel or an instrument in the hand of God.

same divinity as the Father in order to be our director and guide to the Father, which properly pertains to the office of mediator. Similarly, he could not fulfil other aspects of the office unless by his divine power: it was not within man's capability to overcome death and the devil, nor could man alone win righteousness, give life, or grant all the benefits which we receive from him. This same applies to the priesthood, which Christ could not undertake without entering into the heavenly sanctuary. Wherefore, the apostle, to prove that he is the lawful priest, adduces the testimony: "You are my Son, today I have begotten You" (Heb. 1:5; 5:5; Ps. 2:7), by which he clearly shows no one is equal to or suitable for this office without divinity. The conclusion, then, is certain: if Christ is a priest, it is because he is the only begotten Son of God, and on the other hand, he is not the Son of God without considering his divinity – this divinity is a necessary requisite of the office of priesthood.⁶⁰

The power and authority of acquiring life and righteousness, as well as the office of priesthood, cannot be attributed simply to Christ's human nature alone. Calvin was indeed ready to agree with Osiander that the eternal God is the only source of righteousness.⁶¹ The latter's error did not fall on his insistence on the unique source of righteousness, but his bypassing the channel through which this righteousness comes to us:

⁶⁰ *Responsum ad fratres Polonos quomodo mediator sit Christus ad refutandum Stancari errorem* (1560) (CO 9:339). ET from J. N. Tylenda, "Christ the Mediator: Calvin Versus Stancaro," *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1973) 13-14. Regarding the office of the Mediator, Parker argues, "Certainly Christ could not have reconciled us to God unless He had Himself been God. Nevertheless, it is in His manhood that He has procured righteousness for us. If the office of the Mediator belongs to the Godhood of Christ, then it must also belong to the Father and the Holy Spirit, to whom the Godhood is common and also the attributes of the Godhood." T. H. L. Parker, "Calvin's Doctrine of Justification," *Evangelical Quarterly* 24 (1952) 103. This ascription of the office to the humanity alone was explicitly repudiated in Calvin's writings against Stancaro. If the office of the Mediator does not belong to the Godhood of Christ alone, it cannot in like manner belong to the manhood of Christ alone. Indeed, Calvin tends to shift a problem of nature to a problem of office. It is quite alien to his thought to "earth" the office of the Mediator to one of the underlying natures.

⁶¹ *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 9 (CO 2:540): "I do not deny ... that righteousness of which Christ makes us partakers with himself is the eternal righteousness of the eternal God." Also, III, 11, 12 (CO 2:544): "We do not deny that what has been plainly revealed to us in Christ derives from God's secret grace and power, nor do we contend over the fact that the righteousness Christ bestows upon us is the righteousness of God, which proceeds from him."

Rather, we are only making clear how God's righteousness comes to us that we may enjoy it. On this point Osiander has fallen into abominable error.⁶²

Christ is, as it were, a fountain, open to us, from which we may draw what otherwise would lie unprofitably hidden in that deep and secret spring, which comes forth to us in the person of the Mediator.⁶³

By this [notion of essential righteousness] he would lead us away from the priesthood of Christ and the person of the Mediator to his eternal deity.⁶⁴

Therefore, Christ's obedience unto death, and thus His acquired righteousness, should be ascribed to the person or office of the Mediator, rather than simply to one of the underlying natures. With regard to this sacrificial death, the two natures are conjoined together to produce the one atoning effect in the work of the Holy Spirit:

... certain actions, considered in themselves, refer to one nature, but because of a consequent effect they are common to both [*quae tamen propter consequentem effectum ambarum sunt communes*]. For example, dying is proper to human nature, but if we take into account the apostle's meaning when he says that by the blood of Christ our consciences are purified because he offered himself through the Spirit (Heb. 9:14), we will not separate the natures in the act of dying, since atonement could not have been effected by man alone unless the divine power were conjoined.⁶⁵

Through the eternal Spirit. He now shows clearly how the death of Christ is to be regarded; not from its external act but from the power of the Spirit. Christ suffered as man, but in order that His death might effect our salvation it came forth from the power of the Spirit. The sacrifice of eternal atonement was a more than human work. He calls the Spirit eternal so that we know that the reconciliation which he effects is eternal.⁶⁶

⁶² *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 12 (*CO* 2:544).

⁶³ *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 9 (*CO* 2:540).

⁶⁴ *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 8 (*CO* 2:538). We follow Beveridge's selection to read "aeternum" (eternal) rather than Battles' "externum" (outward). See note on *CO* 2:538.

⁶⁵ *CO* 9:340; Tylenda 15.

⁶⁶ Comm. on Heb. 9:14 (*CO* 55:111) *CCNT* 121.

Hence, with regard to the unified effect of salvation, one nature can in some sense be regarded as participating in those acts, which are properly ascribed to the other nature. This saying sounds similar to the realistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum*, but its focus is shifted from the underlying natures to the consequent effect. This effect was accomplished by the human property (mortality in this case) being conjoined with the divine energy. But the divine energy is imparted not through the direct interaction between both natures, but through the work of the Holy Spirit.

vi. Resurrection and Ascension

For Calvin, Christ's death and His resurrection constituted one salvific event. Strictly speaking, when one is mentioned alone, the other is already implied in it.⁶⁷ Christ's death fully manifested His voluntary obedience to the Father and His struggle with death. But the whole undertaking would be useless, if death were the end of Christ's ministry. Its goal was to obtain for us the expiation of our sins, the propitiation towards the Father and the victory over death. In other words, righteousness was acquired and life was won by Christ's death, and this righteousness and life was clearly manifested and actualised in the resurrection of Christ. Therefore, Christ's resurrection in fact sets forth the power and efficacy of His death.

⁶⁷ *Inst.* (1559) II, 16, 13 (CO 2:380). Calvin employed the term "synecdoche" to describe the indivisibility between the death and the resurrection.

As we have already seen, the power and work of the Holy Spirit did not actually cease in Christ's suffering and death, but only turned to a restrained mode so as to leave room for the human affections. After all, the efficacy of the death depended on the divine influence imparted through the work of the Holy Spirit. This dependence was even more clearly shown in the resurrection, through which Christ was declared to be the Son of God by displaying the power of His Spirit.⁶⁸ As for the resurrection, Calvin observed that the scripture ascribes its author sometimes to the Father, sometimes to Christ himself and sometimes to the Spirit.⁶⁹ For Calvin, this apparent discrepancy could be easily reconciled by the fact that the Spirit in the scripture was indiscriminately sometimes called the Spirit of the Father and sometimes the Spirit of Christ. Both the Father and Christ Himself could be rightly said to raise Christ from the dead in the power of the Spirit because they have one and the same eternal divine essence.⁷⁰ In other words, no matter which person was named, the work of the Holy Spirit led us to recognise the glory of one and the same divinity.

⁶⁸ Comm. on Rom. 1:4 (*COR II*, 13:16-7) *CCNT* 16; Comm. on 2 Cor. 13 (*CO* 50:149-150) *CCNT* 171; *Inst.* (1559) II, 16, 13 (*CO* 2:380).

⁶⁹ Comm. on John 2:19 (*CO* 47:48) *CCNT* 56: "Here Christ claims for Himself the glory of His resurrection, though generally in Scripture it is declared to be the work of God the Father. But these two statements are thoroughly accordant. For to commend God's power to us Scripture expressly ascribes it to the Father that He raised His Son from the dead; but here Christ particularly proclaims His own divinity."; Comm. on Rom. 8:11 (*COR II* 13:162) *CCNT* 165: "For the same reason he ascribes to the Father the glory of having raised up Christ. This offered a stronger proof of what he proposed to say than if he had attributed the resurrection to Christ Himself."; Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:45 (*CO* 49:558) *CCNT* 339: "the meaning of this verse can be found in Romans chapter 8, where the apostle declares that 'the body is indeed dead because of sin', and we carry in ourselves what makes for death; but 'the Spirit of Christ', who raised Him up from the dead dwells' also in us; and that He is Life, to raise us up from the dead also at the last."

⁷⁰ Comm. on Rom. 8:9 (*COR II* 13:161) *CCNT* 164-5: "Our readers should note here that the Spirit is sometimes referred to as the Spirit of God the Father, and sometimes as the Spirit of Christ without distinction. This is not only because His whole fulness was poured on Christ as our Mediator and Head, so that each one of us might receive from Him his own portion, but also because the same Spirit is common to the Father and the Son, who have one essence, and the same eternal deity."

While Calvin described the displaying of divinity as “the firm support of our faith”, the importance of Christ’s human nature was not left behind the picture. First, Calvin consistently upheld the principle that the naked majesty of the divinity is simply incomprehensible and inaccessible to us. The resurrected human nature is the very place in which God adapted Himself to our little capacity to show forth his divine glory.⁷¹ Secondly, since Christ’s human nature shared our mortality, the resurrecting power of the Holy Spirit assures us that the work of the same Spirit can certainly achieve the same thing on our own flesh. Thirdly, through the resurrected humanity Christ bestows on believers the power of the Holy Spirit so that a newness of life takes place in them.⁷² These three benefits, namely accessibility to God, assurance of hope and communication of spiritual gifts, are reinforced in the ascension of Christ.

Christ’s ascension marked the end of His bodily presence on earth. However, this bodily absence was not a loss but an advantage for believers, for His protection and governing entered into a new and greater state with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Christ’s presence in the power of the Spirit brings us three benefits. First, “since Christ is entered into heaven in our name, as He had descended to earth for our sakes, He opens up

⁷¹ Comm. on 1 Peter 1:21 (CO 55:227) CCNT 250: “It is evident from this that we cannot believe in God except through Christ, in whom God in a manner makes Himself little, in order to accommodate Himself to our comprehension, and it is Christ alone who can make our consciences at peace, so that we may dare to come in confidence to God. *That raised him up from the dead.* He [Peter] adds that Christ was raised from the dead in order that our faith and hope might have a firm foundation to support them. Here again the remark about universal and indiscriminate faith in God is refuted, for if there had been no resurrection of Christ, God would still remain in heaven. But Peter says that it is not possible for faith to be put in Him unless Christ has risen. It is then evident that faith is something other than beholding the naked majesty of God.”

⁷² *Inst.* (1559) II, 16, 13 (CO 2:381).

for us a way there; so that the gate is now open to us which was formerly closed on account of sin”.⁷³ Secondly, “He appears before God as intercessor and advocate on our behalf”.⁷⁴ Thirdly, He protects us by sharing with us His spiritual power and wealth. In the final analysis, the ascension does not add new content to our benefits, but only confirms those gained in the death and resurrection:

Certainly Christ was our Advocate when He lived on earth, but this is a further allowance for our weakness that He ascended into heaven to undertake the task of being our Patron.⁷⁵

For Calvin, the effective communication of the salvation is an integral part of the salvation itself. His understanding of the ascension intimates his deep pastoral concern for how feeble believers can have faith and hope firmly planted in their hearts. The faith and hope would neither be firm enough if they did not settle in the very majesty of the divinity, nor be able to find an entrance if the majesty were not accommodated through Christ’s humanity:

Just as the veil covered the recesses of the sanctuary and yet opened a door to it, so, though His Godhead was hidden in the flesh of Christ, He yet leads us to heaven, and no one will find God unless the Man Christ is his way and his door. We are thus reminded that the glory of Christ is not to be thought of from the outward aspect of His flesh nor is His flesh to be despised because it conceals like a veil the majesty of God and since it is that which directs us to the enjoyment of all God’s benefits.⁷⁶

⁷³ *Genevan Catechism* (CO 6:33-34) LCC XXII 101. Also *Inst.* (1559) II, 16, 16 (CO 2:383).

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Comm. on Heb. 9:24 (CO 55:118) CCNT 128.

⁷⁶ Comm. on Heb. 10:20 (CO 55:129) CCNT 141. See also Comm. on Heb 7:25 (CO 55:94) CCNT 101.

As to the humanity in the ascension, Calvin could freely call it the veil, the sanctuary, or even the temple, but his basic meaning was the same: Christ's humanity is the place in which we can meet the majestic and yet merciful God. This mediating function relies not so much on the essential quality of the humanity as on its instrumentality in God's hand:

But it is objected that the flesh of Christ cannot give life, since it was liable to death and even now is not in itself immortal; and again, that it is not the property of flesh at all to give life to souls. I reply, although this power comes from another source than the flesh, this is no reason why this office may not accord with it. For as the eternal Word of God is the fountain of life, so His flesh is a channel to pour out to us the life which resides intrinsically, as they say, in His divinity. In this sense it is called life-giving, because it communicates to us a life that it borrows from elsewhere.⁷⁷

. This notion of instrumentalism was brought to its highest pitch, when Calvin explained why Heb. 9:11 seems to deny the ascended humanity to be part of the creation:

It might seem strange that he [the apostle] denies that the body of Christ was *of this creation* [*huius fuisse creationis*]. Certainly it was created of the seed of Abraham and subject to sufferings and death. I reply that he is not concerned here with the material body or its quality but with the spiritual power which comes to us from it. To the extent that the flesh of Christ gives life and is heavenly food to feed our souls, to the extent that His blood is spiritual drink and cleansing, to that extent we are not to think that there is anything earthly or elemental in them. Let us remember that this is said in respect of the old tabernacle which was made of wood, brass, skins, various coverings, gold and silver, that is of dead things. But the power of God breathes upon the flesh of Christ to make it a living and spiritual temple.⁷⁸

Here, Calvin obviously had the Lord's Supper in mind. The function of Christ's ascended humanity, as clearly shown in the Lord's Supper, does not depend on the

⁷⁷ Comm. on John 6:51 (CO 47:152) CCNT 167.

⁷⁸ Comm. on Heb. 9:11 (CO 55:110) CCNT 120.

properties of its created essence, but on the divine influence or elevation through the work of the Holy Spirit.

III. Christ's Humanity and the Work of the Holy Spirit

We have seen that Calvin's understanding of the office of the Mediator is closely bound up with a corresponding office of the Holy Spirit. This was engendered by his conviction about the completeness and distinctiveness of the two natures, as enshrined in the so-called *extra Calvinisticum*. To him, it seems that any notion of direct interaction between the two natures will finally distract our attention from the very foundation of our salvation, i.e. the office of our Mediator and Redeemer. But the fact that the two natures were conjoined together to constitute one salvific effect implies that there must be some sort of co-ordination between them. The real question is not whether there was the divine influence upon the human nature, but how this influence actually took place. Again, Calvin's solution was to shift a problem of nature to that of office, and this time pneumatologically. It was in the office of the Holy Spirit that the humanity was elevated and incorporated into the office of the Mediator. Based on our previous discussion, we will sum up Calvin's understanding of Christ's humanity in the redemption as well as the Spirit's work upon it in the following passage.

According to Calvin, there are two characteristics of Christ's human nature that should be upheld in our understanding of the salvation. First, Christ was like us in every aspect. In other words, the created properties of His humanity are the same as ours. In his exposition of Christ's earthly life, we can see that Calvin chiefly had in mind the

infirmity of Christ's humanity such as hunger, fear, death, etc. Christ was able to share our feelings, because His senses and affections were just the same as ours. Although He did not absolutely need these experiences to understand our situations, He voluntarily subjected Himself to them so as to show His sympathy toward us. In this way, God accommodated Himself to our condition so that we can really know His mercy towards us and are persuaded to obey Him willingly.⁷⁹ Also in this way, Christ could struggle with the fear of death and obey the Father in our place, attaining the reconciliation between God and us. In order to safeguard the genuineness of this human infirmity, Calvin used to say that Christ's divinity came to a reposed state as far as it was necessary for the Mediator to discharge his office. However, this does not mean that the humanity was completely left alone at these moments. For Calvin, Christ's human acts in general and its weakness in particular should never be considered in themselves. The real significance of Christ's physical growth, sympathetic weeping, learning obedience and even dying will be severely obscured, if they are understood simply as a necessary consequence owing to the human nature.⁸⁰ Rather, the human acts should point beyond

⁷⁹ In contrast with the final end of penal substitution, Calvin called this the "first purpose" or "proximate end" of Christ's suffering: "The first purpose of the sufferings of Christ was that in this way He should be accustomed to obedience: not that He was forcibly compelled to it, or had any need of such practices, in the way that the fierceness of oxen or horses is tamed. He was more than willing of His own accord to give the Father the obedience due to Him. He did this for our benefit, to give us the instance and the pattern of His own submission even to death itself, although this can be said with truth, that it was in His death that Christ fully learned what it meant to obey God, since that was the point at which He reached His greatest self-denial. He renounced His own will and gave Himself over to the Father to the extent of meeting death, which He dreaded, freely and willingly. The meaning is, therefore, that by the experience of His sufferings Christ was taught how far we ought to submit to and obey God. Therefore we also should be instructed and guided into obedience by God by His example, by our various tribulations, and finally by death itself." Comm. on Heb. 5:8 (CO 55:63) CCNT 65-6. As in the exposition of the temptations, the "apprenticeship" is not so much on Christ's humanity as on ours.

⁸⁰ Comm. on Luke 2:40 (CO 55:103-104) CCNT 106-7: "He first says that He *grew, and waxed strong* in spirit, meaning that with His years, so did His spiritual gifts increase. We infer that these advances or increases are to His human nature. Nothing could be added to His divinity. ... The only difference between us and Him is that He freely, and of His own will, took on the weaknesses that narrow us by necessity." Also, when commenting on Christ's groaning in the spirit owing to Lazarus' death, Calvin writes "But it

themselves to the voluntary submission of the Son of God for our sake. This signifying function was conferred on this natural endowment of the human nature by the work of the Holy Spirit. Far from ceasing from work, the Holy Spirit was actively incorporating the human weaknesses and filling them with the efficacious grace.

The second characteristic of Christ's human nature is its sinlessness. In other words, His humanity possesses an undefiled and sanctified spiritual quality. Here the divine influence is even more explicit. Calvin was not tired of reminding us that Christ's humanity was unique and totally different from ours in this respect. This utter difference was at least equally crucial for our salvation. We can agree with Foxgrover's observation that for Calvin Christ's "sinlessness consisted in keeping his emotions within 'proper limits'",⁸¹ but we should also pay attention to the fact that Calvin grounded this

will, to my mind, be more agreeable to Scripture if we make the simple statement that when the Son of God put on our flesh He also of His own accord put on human feelings, so that He differed in nothing from His brethren, sin only excepted. In this way we detract nothing from the glory of Christ when we say that it was only a voluntary submission, by which it came to pass that He was like us in the emotions of the soul. Moreover, since He was submissive from the beginning, we must not imagine that He was free and exempt from them. Herein He proved Himself to be our brother, so that we might know that we have a Mediator who willingly excuses and is ready to help those infirmities which He has experienced in Himself" Comm. on John 11:33 (CO 47:265) CCNT 12. Regarding Christ's declaration that no one takes his life from him, Calvin commented "Here is another consolation to encourage the disciples at the death of Christ; He is not forced to die, but offers Himself willingly for the salvation of His flock. Not only does He deny that men have power to kill Him without His permission, but He declares that He is free from all violence of necessity. It is different with us. We are under a necessity of dying, because of our sins. Christ Himself was certainly born a mortal man; but it was a voluntary submission and not a bondage imposed by another." Comm. on John 10:18 (CO 47:246) CCNT 268-9.

⁸¹ D. Foxgrover, "The Humanity of Christ: Within Proper Limits," in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*, R. V. Schnucker (ed.) (Kirksville, Missouri: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1988) 105. Foxgrover positively regards this notion of sinlessness as "a creative expression of the orthodox confession of Christ's true humanity and divinity, for it emphasizes a dynamic, rather than an ontological interpretation of sinlessness." But he also observes the difficulty this notion brought about: "What is noteworthy, and troublesome, about Calvin's exegesis is that in one passage he cannot avoid questioning the sinlessness of Christ, while in the other he cannot help undermining the genuineness of Christ's humanity". He suggests, "Perhaps Calvin could have avoided the problem if he had clearly affirmed that Christ remained sinless through the aid of the divine nature, rather than suggesting that Christ's humanity differed from that of others. Christ's humanity was not sinless because it was ontologically unique, but because its emotions remained within limits." It seems to us that Foxgrover rightly discerns the dynamic

moderation on an exceptional condition of Christ's will and mind. From the very outset, Christ's humanity was kept pure in the power of the Holy Spirit. His mind and will was constantly fortified and sustained by the power of the Spirit so that it was able to hold strong faith to God and not to rebel against God's will even under the extreme temptations. The only concession Calvin could allow was the lag time to which the human mind was prone in actual operation. However, any transient wavering of mind thus observed should not be reckoned disobedient or sinful. In other words, Calvin's notion of sinlessness is much stronger than the mere fact that the humanity of Christ was kept from committing actual sinful acts. It indeed asserts the distinctive ontological condition of His humanity. From the incarnation onwards, the divine influence through the work of the Holy Spirit sanctified Christ's human will and mind to the eschatological condition of *non posse peccare*. With respect to our sinfulness, Christ has never assumed this bit of our old man,⁸² but put on our "future" man straight away.⁸³

divine influence on the human nature, but overlooks the fact that Calvin really wants to defend the ontological distinctiveness of Christ's humanity. Calvin held both solidarity and uniqueness simultaneously, by adopting the essence-quality distinction.

⁸² Calvin did not compromise his conviction on Christ's uniquely sinless human nature, even when he was confronted by the biblical texts which seems to suggest otherwise. For instance, as Rom. 8:3 seems to suggest that God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, Calvin comments: "Christ, he says, came in the likeness of sinful flesh. Although the flesh of Christ was unpolluted by any stain, it had the appearance of being sinful, since it sustained the punishment due to our sins, and certainly death exerted every part of its power on the flesh of Christ as though it were subject to it." Comm. on Rom. 8:3 (*COR* II 13:155) *CCNT* 159. Also, in 2 Co. 5:21 Paul writes "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us", Calvin comments, "It is commonly taught that here 'sin' means an expiatory sacrifice for sin, so that it is rendered *piaculum* in Latin. ... But the meaning of this word and of the entire sentence will be better understood if we compare the two sides of the antithesis contained in it. Sin is opposed to righteousness for Paul teaches that we were made the righteousness of God as a result of Christ's having been made sin. Here righteousness means not a quality or habit but something imputed to us, since we are said to have received the righteousness of Christ. ... How can we become righteous before God? In the same way as Christ became a sinner." Comm. on 2 Cor. 5:21 (*CO* 50:74) *CCNT* 81. It should be noted that sinlessness is an ontological fact while sinfulness is only an imputation. Also when commenting on our participation of Christ's death or our mortification, Calvin admits that there is only likeness, not complete parallel between Christ and us: "It may, however, be objected, that Peter is here speaking unsuitably in making us to be conformable to Christ in that we suffer in the flesh, for it is certain that there was nothing sinful in Christ which required to be corrected. But the answer is obvious, that it is not necessary that a comparison should correspond in every part. It is enough that we should be made conformable to the death of Christ to some

As to the functions of Christ's humanity throughout the process of redemption, we heuristically summarise them into five. First, it is the means of accommodation through which the inaccessible or even terrifying glory of God comes to our sight in a merciful and friendly manner. Secondly, it serves as the requisite for the penal substitution. It was the humanity, which provides the capacity of human affections and mortality. Thirdly, it provides a model for Christian life so that believers can have right orientation in practising their faith. Fourthly, it provides a pledge for believers so that their hope of eternal life can have a firm foundation. Fifthly, it functions as a channel through which power of life or efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit was imparted to believers. This is no more than a heuristic classification, for Calvin freely employed and combined these notions to expound the various biblical descriptions of Christ's redemption. For example, Calvin could describe the resurrection of Christ's body as a means of accommodation, a

extent. In the same way Paul's phrase that we are planted in the likeness of His death, (Rom. 6.5) is suitably explained in that the manner is not altogether the same, but His death is in a way the type and pattern of our mortification." Comm. on 1 Pet. 4:1 (CO 55:270-271) CCNT 299.

⁸³ Hart argues, "The humanity of the Saviour is the place where God has worked out our salvation, and all that he wills to do for humankind he does, in the first instance, in this one man. If Christ has become the 'old man' in order to be put to death for us, so too he is the 'new man' who has recreated our broken and fallen humanity, taking it up into a life of obedient and loving sonship, living out this life in our stead, sanctifying our flesh, and offering it to the Father for us." (Hart, 76). If we understand Hart correctly, he intends to argue that according to Calvin's teachings Christ really took up our "old man", that is, His human nature was ontologically in our present fallen condition, though not actually committing sinful acts, throughout the whole earthly ministry. However, evidences show that Calvin refrained from ascribing this fallen state to Christ's humanity. We can agree with Bromiley that "Calvin, for example, could say that Christ in grace 'joins himself to base and ignoble men,' but Calvin and other Reformers shrank from stating boldly that Christ took 'the concrete form of human nature marked by Adam's fall,' as Barth thought we have to do, and as Menno also believed we must do unless we find in Christ the heavenly flesh that he did not take from Mary." G. W. Bromiley, "The Reformers and the Humanity of Christ," in *Perspectives on Christology*, M. Shuster & R. Muller (eds) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991) 84. With the same observation, van Buren painstakingly asks, "But this raises a serious problem. Is it because of the infirmities of fear and sorrow and the dread of death that we need pardon? Is not pardon required, rather, for precisely those infirmities in which Christ, according to Calvin, had no share? Certainly Christ entered into the situation of natural man, God's good creature, but has He entered into the situation of fallen man, the sinner who needs reconciliation? Is the obedience of Christ the miraculous obedience of one who was made sin, who precisely *from the place of sinful man* was nevertheless obedient

pledge of our future hope, as well as the place in which the Holy Spirit fills with the efficacy of our vivification. But without exception, it was in the power of the Holy Spirit that the humanity was raised to its unique place in the economy of the salvation.

We have already seen the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the person of the Mediator. In the next two chapters, we will turn to examine how the Holy Spirit is imparting the salvific benefits of the Mediator to believers.

to the Father, or does Calvin not see it rather as almost a status or condition that Christ enjoyed?" P. van Buren, *Christ in Our Place* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957) 17.

Chapter 6

The Holy Spirit and the Reception of the Mediator's Benefits

In this chapter, we will proceed to examine the role of the Holy Spirit in imparting the benefits of Christ's saving works. In other words, our task is to investigate how the conception of "communion with Christ" and its pneumatological counterpart "the Holy Spirit as bond" are applied in the problem of receiving Christ's benefits. As discussed previously, Calvin first came up with this notion in his eucharistic teachings. However, its application in our current topic was marked with Calvin's long struggle against various theological opponents. In the first section, we will trace how the christological motif was progressively merged with the pneumatological one in various editions of the *Institutes*. Through a glimpse of its development, we will highlight Calvin's theological concerns behind the application of the notions. In the second section, we will examine the office and works of the Holy Spirit in imparting Christ's benefits. As regards "benefits", Calvin, as far as we know, left us neither a comprehensive definition nor an exhaustive listing of them. However, both in his exegetical and in his doctrinal writings, two benefits are frequently mentioned in a pair as their chief representatives, namely justification and sanctification (or their synonyms). So our attention will be focused on the reception of these two benefits, which are honoured to be the double grace of Christ by Calvin himself. We will now first trace the development of the notion *communio Christi vinculo Spiritus* in his *Institutes*.

- I. Glory to God and peace to the elect: the development of *communio Christi*
vinculo Spiritus in the *Institutes*
- i. Point of departure: the 1536 *Institutes*

With the first edition of his *Institutes*, the young Calvin took up the task of defending the evangelical faith of his time. In this early stage, Calvin did not devote a special discussion to our way of receiving Christ's benefits. The matter was largely implied under more conventional Reformation topics. Conceptions such as "communion" or "communication" were not as prominent as the case in the later editions. However, most of the constituent elements for a more comprehensive account can be gleaned throughout his writing. For instance, in expounding our justification in Christ, Calvin could freely employ the language of participation to defend the Reformation axioms of *solus Christus* and *sola fide*:

When, therefore, we have found in Christ alone the good will of God the Father toward us, life, salvation, in short, the very Kingdom of Heaven itself, he alone ought to be more than enough for us. For this we must ponder: that utterly nothing will be lacking to us which can conduce to our salvation and good, if he is ours; that he and all things of his become ours [*si ille noster est; illum vero nostrum fieri et omnia quae illius sunt*], ... For with ready hands he gives himself to us only that we may receive him in faith. ... When therefore by faith we possess Christ and all that is his [*Christum et quidquid eius est, fide possidemus*], it must certainly be established that as he himself is the beloved Son of the Father and heir of the Kingdom of Heaven, so we also through him have been adopted as children of God, and are his brothers and companions in such a way as to be partakers of the same inheritance.¹

¹ *Inst.* (1536) 59-60 (CO 1:74); see also 34 (CO 1:48-49) "By Christ's righteousness then are we made righteous and become fulfillers of the law. This righteousness we put on [*induimus*] as our own, and surely God accepts it as ours, reckoning us holy, pure, and innocent."; and 37 (CO 1:51) "It is that thus engrafted [*inserti*] into him we are already, in a manner, partakers of eternal life, having entered the Kingdom of God through hope. This is too little: we experience such participation in him [*eius participationem*] that, although we are still foolish in ourselves, he is our wisdom before God; while we are sinners, he is our

It should be noted that the theological content within such communion language as “possessing”, “participating” or “engrafting” goes little further than the consensus among all Reformers: God placed everything regarding our salvation in Christ alone (conversely, nothing found within ourselves), and we receive them through faith alone. The overall concern, even in the presence of communion language, did not escape the extrinsic and vicarious aspects of salvation. Within the Reformation tradition, these aspects were expressed in the forensic notion of penal substitution, which Calvin certainly embraced and clearly expressed in his understanding of the Lord’s Supper:

Great indeed is the fruit of sweetness and comfort our souls can gather from this sacrament: because we recognise Christ to have been so engrafted in us as we, in turn, have been engrafted in him, so that whatever is his we are permitted to call ours, whatever is ours to reckon as his [*quod sic Christum nobis, sic nos illi vicissim insertos esse agnoscimus, ut quidquid ipsius est, nostrum vocare, quidquid nostrum est, ipsius censere liceat*]. As a consequence, we may dare assure ourselves that eternal life is ours; that the Kingdom of Heaven can no more be cut off from us than from Christ himself; on the contrary, that we cannot be condemned for our sins any more than can he, because they are not now ours, but his. Not that any guilt is rightly to be imputed to him, but that he has set himself as debtor for them, and presents himself as the payer [*Non quod ipsi ulla culpa iure imputanda sit, sed quia eorum se et debitorem statuit et solutorem praestat*].²

In other words, from the very outset, Calvin, possibly out of intuition, had already attained a synopsis of these two linguistic uses. For him, justification can be expressed interchangeably by either that “we are engrafted in Christ to partake His righteousness” or that “His righteousness is reckoned as ours”. Prominent as the communion language

righteousness; while we are unclean, he is our purity; ... In brief, because all his things are ours and we have all things in him, in us there is nothing.”

² *Inst.* (1536) 102-103 (CO 1:118-119).

became in his later writings, Calvin kept this forensic notion as a lively element in his thought. We will later show how these two languages converged on Calvin's inclination toward an office-christology together with its pneumatological counterpart. For the time being, let us proceed to examine the other chief benefit (i.e. sanctification) in this 1536 edition of the *Institutes*. Here we encounter the most impressive and pregnant expressions of communion language in this edition. In discussing the nature of baptism, Calvin writes:

Indeed (as the apostle says), "we have been baptised into his death," "buried with him into death, ... that we may walk in newness of life" [Rom. 6:3-4]. By these words he not only exhorts us to follow Christ as if he said that we are admonished through baptism by the example of Christ's death to die to our desires and by the example of his resurrection to be aroused to righteousness. But he also takes hold of something far higher, namely, that through baptism Christ makes us sharers in his death, that we may be engrafted in it [*per baptismum Christus nos mortis suae fecerit participes, ut in eam inseramur*]. And, just as the twig draws substance and nourishment from the root to which it is grafted, so those who receive baptism with right faith truly feel the effective working of Christ's death in the mortification of their flesh, together with the working of his resurrection in the quickening of the Spirit [Rom. 6:8].³

Calvin here was so conscious of keeping a distance from the Zwinglian understanding of sacrament that he refused to leave Christ's death and resurrection simply as a moral example, and accordingly sanctification a human imitation of it. For him, sanctification is something more than a mere human striving. By the same token, the sacrament itself is more than a mark of human confession. Its primary function is to testify to us what God

³ *Inst.* (1536) 95 (CO 1,111); see also 98 (CO 1, 114) "Lastly, our faith receives from baptism the consolation of its sure testimony to us that we are not only engrafted into the death and life of Christ, but so united and joined to Christ himself that we become sharers in all his blessings [non modo in mortem et vitam Christi nos insitos esse, sed sic ipsi Christo unitos et compactos ut omnium eius bonorum participes simus]. For he dedicated and sanctified baptism in his own body in order that he might have it in common with us as the firmest bond of the union and fellowship which he has deigned to enter into with us [unionis ac societatis, quam nobiscum inire dignatus est]."

in Christ is truly doing for us. This conviction motivated him to introduce some realistic notion of participation: Christ's death and resurrection is a perpetual reality, from which God truly communicates transforming efficacy upon us through faith. The common communion language between justification and sanctification paved the way for a unified view of the way of imparting both benefits.

Compared with later editions of the *Institutes*, the discussion in 1536 on the role of the Holy Spirit in imparting salvific benefits is not entirely clear. The later notion "the Holy Spirit as bond" did not yet appear. However, there are still evidences showing that Calvin had at least some idea about how the Spirit functions in this respect:

Grace is itself the power and action of the Spirit: through grace God the Father, in the Son, accomplishes whatever good there is; through grace He justifies, sanctifies, and cleanses us, calls and draws us to himself, that we may attain salvation.⁴

Then through the gifts of his Holy Spirit he [Christ] dwells and reigns in us and through him the lusts of our flesh are each day mortified more and more. We are indeed sanctified, that is, consecrated to the Lord in complete purity of life, our hearts formed to obedience to the law.⁵

In sum, all the essential elements for later development had already been laid down in this early work. Calvin could separately acknowledge that God or Christ justifies and sanctifies us through the gift of the Holy Spirit and that we are justified and sanctified by being engrafted into Christ. This strongly suggests that one can attain a more

⁴ *Inst.* (1536) 57 (CO 1:72)

⁵ *Inst.* (1536) 35 (CO 1:49); see also 18 (CO 1: 30) "Descending to earth, he [Christ] brought with him all the rich heavenly blessings and with a lavish hand showered them upon us. These are the Holy Spirit's gifts. Through him [Christ] we are reborn, wrested from the power and chains of the devil, freely adopted as children of God, sanctified for every good works."

comprehensive account by working out their inner connection. However, the synthesis was triggered not so much by the desire of perfecting a theological system, as by the heat of polemics.

ii. Polemics against works righteousness: the 1539 *Institutes*

The 1539 *Institutes* was a substantial expansion of its predecessor. It also displayed a great advance in expounding our way of receiving Christ's benefit. For the first time, Calvin combined justification and sanctification and put forward a unified view on their reception. Communion with Christ was first raised as the common ground for imparting both benefits:

Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace [*cuius ex participatione duplicem potissimum gratiam recipiamus*]: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's Spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.⁶

We can probably glimpse the impetus behind this development from Calvin's reply to Sadolet of the same year. In it, the disputation between the Reformer and his Catholic opponent regarding the notion of righteousness can be boiled down to two questions: 1) can good works in some sense contribute to our righteousness before God, and thus in some derived, though not primary, sense be a cause of salvation? 2) is it not true that the

⁶ *Inst.* (1539) c. 6 (CO 1, 737).

doctrine of justification by faith alone does not leave any room for good works?⁷ The first question called for a defence of the extrinsic character of righteousness and salvation, while the second the unity between justification and sanctification. Besides the reply, Calvin expanded the discussion of the relation between justification by faith and merits of works to a new chapter in the 1539 *Institutes*. In it, Calvin not only defended his understanding of righteousness with scriptural support, but also formulated a proper relation between justification and sanctification. The communion language latent in his thought proved to be a very promising tool in fulfilling this task.

First of all, Calvin firmly adhered to the extrinsic character of salvation by emphasising the forensic notion of righteousness. For him, there can be absolutely no question of intrinsic human resource which can in whatever sense be regarded as a cause of our salvation. The source of righteousness is outside us and we are only reckoned righteous by God through free remission of sin:

From this [scriptural proof] it is also evident that we are justified before God solely by the intervention of Christ's righteousness. This is equivalent to saying that man is not righteous in himself but because the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him by imputation [*hominem non in se ipso iustum esse, sed quia Christi iustitia imputatione cum illo communicatur*] – something worth carefully noting. ... You see that our righteousness is not in us but in Christ [*non in nobis, sed in Christo esse iustitiam nostram*], that we possess it only because we are partakers in Christ; indeed, with him we possess all its riches.⁸

⁷ *Responsio ad Sadoletum* (1539) (CO 5:396-9) LCC XXII 234-7.

⁸ *Inst.* (1539) c. 6 (CO 1, 745).

As in the first edition, Calvin here employed communion language to complement the well-established forensic notion of justification. But with a significant step forwards, Calvin explicitly defined righteousness or justification in terms of “communion with Christ”:

But we define justification as follows: the sinner, received into communion with Christ [*in Christi communionem receptus*], is reconciled to God by his grace, while, cleansed by Christ’s blood, he obtains forgiveness of sins, and clothed with Christ’s righteousness as if it were his own, he stands confident before the heavenly judgement seat.⁹

Thus, him whom he receives into union with himself the Lord is said to justify [*Quem ergo Dominus in coniunctionem recipit, eum dicitur iustificare*], because he cannot receive him into grace nor join him to himself unless he turns him from a sinner into a righteous man. We add that this is done through forgiveness of sins. ... It is obvious, therefore, that those whom God embraces are made righteous solely by the fact that they are purified when their spots are washed away by forgiveness of sins.¹⁰

Communion with Christ is then no longer a paraphrase of its forensic counterpart, but the foundation of imparting the benefit of justification. With this new bearing, Calvin was in a better position to respond to the Catholic challenge. According to his own diagnosis, the Roman notion of righteousness went astray when they regarded the free grace of God as the grace of sanctification, in that God renews us to good works and thus accepts us accordingly. In this way, they mixed justification with sanctification, or even subsumed the former under the latter. Therefore, strictly speaking, salvation does not solely lie in God’s mercy, but also in our own effort in pursuing holiness, even though the

⁹ *Inst.* (1539) c. 6 (CO 1, 785).

¹⁰ *Inst.* (1539) c. 6 (CO 1, 744); also CO 1, 743: “Indeed, it [faith] justifies in no other way but in that it leads us into sharing in the righteousness of Christ [*Imo non alia ratione iustificat, nisi quia in communicationem iustitiae Christi nos inducit*].”

latter cannot be possible without the help of God's grace. For Calvin, works, whether of the natural capacity or of the spiritual gifts, should be thoroughly excluded from the matter of justification. Calvin was so adamant to defend the Reformation principle that he expressed a rare refutation of Augustine's view in this respect, thinking that his great theological mentor actually weakened his own conviction of depriving man of all credit for righteousness.¹¹ Calvin found that this notion falsely put good works ahead of our communion with Christ, but in fact the reverse should be upheld:

But for a long time the world has been taught otherwise. So all sorts of "moral" good works have been discovered whereby men are rendered pleasing to God before they are engrafted into Christ [*Reperta sunt moralia nescio quae bona opera quibus gratiosi Deo reddantur homines antequam Christo inserantur*]. As if Scripture were lying when it says that all who have not the Son are in death! If they are in death, how can they beget the substance of life? ... Therefore, as soon as you become engrafted into Christ through faith, you are made a son of God, an heir of heaven, a partaker in righteousness, a possessor of life; and (by this their falsehood may be better refuted) you obtain not the opportunity to gain merit but all the merits of Christ, for they are communicated to you.¹²

To avoid this confusion, Calvin's solution is to subsume both justification and sanctification under communion with Christ.¹³ The extrinsic character of justification is

¹¹ *Inst.* (1539) c. 6 (CO 1, 740). Calvin's refutation of Augustine's view was quite uncompromising in this edition. His tone was softened in the subsequent editions by adding "vel saltem loquendi ratio".

¹² *Inst.* (1539) c. 6 (CO 1, 773-4); see also CO 1, 757 & 759.

¹³ With reference to a letter written by Calvin to Peter Martyr in 1555, both Tamburello and Rankin draw our attention to the "two communions" mentioned by Calvin; D. E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) 86-7 and W. D. Rankin, "Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance," (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1997) 176-186. Tamburello hints that there is a correspondence between these "two communions" and Calvin's teaching of justification and sanctification, for both the "first" communion and justification are total while both the "second" communion and sanctification are partial. But Tamburello's overall tone is to regard them as two aspects of a single communion. However, Rankin quite literally takes them as two types or levels of communion, namely mystical communion and spiritual communion, and comments, "Thus, mystical communion grounds justification while spiritual communion appears to ground sanctification" (Rankin 183-4). Perhaps Rankin is misled by Calvin's loose choice of wording in a

then firmly established on communion with the Christ *extra nos*. Apart from snatching justification out of sanctification, communion with Christ also provides a good platform to bring them together:

Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify [*Nullum ergo Christus iustificat, quem non simul sanctificet*]. These benefits are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond [*perpetuo et individuo nexu*], so that those whom he illumines by his wisdom, he redeems; those whom he redeems, he justifies; those whom he justifies, he sanctifies. But, since the question concerns only righteousness and sanctification, let us dwell upon these. Although we may distinguish them, Christ contains both of them inseparably in himself. Do you wish, then, to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; but you cannot possess him without being made partaker in his sanctification, because he cannot be divided into pieces [*quia in frusta discerpi non potest*]. Since, therefore, it is solely by expending himself that the Lord gives us these benefits to enjoy, he bestows both of them at the same time, the one never without the other [*alterum nunquam sine altero*]. Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works [*nos non sine operibus, neque tamen per opera iustificari*], since in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness [*quoniam in Christi participatione, qua iustificamur, non minus sanctificatio continetur quam iustitia*].¹⁴

In this way, Calvin could counter the second charge of repudiating good works by the fact that a doctrine of justification without sanctification was simply not his teaching but a calumny from his opponent. For him, justification cannot be divided from sanctification any more than Christ can be divided into parts. Behind the Roman notion of righteousness Calvin recognised a valid concern about the unity of faith and good

personal letter. In it, Calvin himself indeed explains “I come now to a second Communion, which, as I think, is the fruit and effect of the former. For after that Christ, by the interior influence of His Spirit, has bound us to Himself and united us to His Body, He exerts a second influence of His Spirit, enriching us by His gifts”. The so-called “first Communion” is actually the commencement of our communion with Christ while the second is its fruitful operation. As ground of imparting salvific benefits, we do not see there are types or levels of communion consistently devoted to different benefits in Calvin’s thought.

¹⁴ Inst. (1539) c. 6 (CO 1, 776).

works, of justification and sanctification. His own solution to the problem is to ground the unity, not here within our human soul, but out there in Christ.

Nonetheless, it is to be noted that behind Calvin's polemics against works righteousness stood two burning concerns, which left indelible marks on Calvin's theology: one is the undiminished honour of God and the other is the assurance of our salvation.¹⁵ These twin concerns also played an important role in shaping Calvin's account on imparting salvific benefits.

For the undiminished honour of God, Calvin insisted that with regard to our salvation all glory and honour should be credited to God alone.¹⁶ The notion of merits or righteousness from human works is unacceptable because it divides the credits between God and us.¹⁷ In addition to the influence of the Reformation tradition, Calvin at least reinforced, if not actually obtained, this insight through his own exegetical works, especially those of the Pauline epistles. In borrowing the Aristotelian conception of four causes, Calvin succeeded in giving a comprehensive view of how God single-handedly establishes our salvation and thus deserves all the glory:

¹⁵ These twin concerns underlie Calvin's discussion on faith, repentance, justification and even eternal election and are explicitly named in his refutation of Roman doctrine of penance (*CO* 1:720, "Duo hic perpendere convenit: ut integer et illibatus suus honor Christo servetur; ut conscientiae do peccati venia securae pacem apud Deum habeant. ...") and his argument for free justification (*CO* 1:751-754, particularly "Atque omino quidem duo hic praecipue spectanda sunt: ut Domino illibata constet, ac veluti sarta tecta, sua gloria; conscientiis vero nostris coram ipsius iudicio, placida quies ac serena tranquillitas.")

¹⁶ For discussion on the theme "the honour of God" in Calvin's thought, see also M. de Kroon, *The Honour of God and Human Salvation* (Edinburgh & New York: T & T Clark, 2001).

¹⁷ As mentioned above, in this respect Calvin thought he was closer to the heart of Augustine than Augustine himself had been.

If we look at these, however, we will find that, as far as the establishment of our salvation is concerned, none of them has anything to do with works. For Scripture everywhere proclaims that the efficient cause [*efficientem causam*] of our obtaining eternal life is the mercy of the Heavenly Father and his freely given love toward us [*patris coelestis misericordiam et gratuitam erga nos dilectionem*]. Surely the material cause [*materialem*] is Christ, with his obedience, through which he acquired righteousness for us. What shall we say is the formal or instrumental [*formalem vel instrumentalem*] cause but faith? ... As for the final cause [*finalem*], the apostle testifies that it consists both in the proof of divine justice and in the praise of God's goodness. Since we see that every particle of our salvation stands thus outside of us [*omnes salutis nostrae particulas ita extra nos constare*], why is it that we still trust or glory in works?¹⁸

This theocentric understanding of salvation provides a big picture, in which the Reformation axioms of *solus Christus* and *sola fide* find their proper place in the whole divine economy. Moreover, it encourages Calvin to contemplate more deeply the co-ordination of different offices of the Three Persons in the course of salvation:

the efficient cause of our salvation consists in God the Father's love; the material cause in God the Son's obedience; the instrumental cause in the Spirit's illumination, that is, faith; the final cause, in the glory of God's great generosity [*effectum nostrae salutis in Dei patris dilectione situm esse; materiam in filii obedientia; instrumentum in spiritus illuminatione, hoc est fide; finem esse tantae Dei benignitatis gloriam*].¹⁹

The triadic formula "Father's mercy – Son's redemption – Spirit's illumination and sealing" is not confined to the discussion of justification, nor is it a parroted repetition to

¹⁸ *Inst.* (1539) c. 6 (*CO* 1: 766); see also Comm. on Rom. 3:22, 24; Comm. on Eph. 1:5-8. We cannot agree with Santmire that the third cause, faith, is anthropocentric; H. P. Santmire, "Justification in Calvin's 1540 Romans Commentary," *Church History* 33 (1964) 298. Calvin's intention in employing the notion of four causes is clearly to pre-empt the ground underneath works righteousness, by concentrating all thinkable causes of salvation upon God. In the light of this theocentrism, the emphasis of the third cause cannot be understood apart from the honour of God, as Calvin himself writes in the same commentary, "we must note that no greater honour can be given to God than by sealing His truth by our faith. On the other hand, no greater dishonour can be given than by mistrust and incertitude." 1540 Comm. on Rom. 4:20 (*COR* II 13:96).

¹⁹ *Inst.* (1539) c. 6 (*CO* 1:768).

ward off suspicion of non-orthodoxy. Evidences show that Calvin meant to apply them in various theological areas. For instance, in the exposition of the third article of the Apostles' Creed, Calvin adds:

he [Paul] teaches that we are washed and sanctified through the name of Lord Jesus and through the Spirit of our God: as if he says that those very graces of Christ are stamped and engraved in our consciences through the Holy Spirit. Hence to the faith in the Father and the Son [*fidei in patrem et filium*] is well added the faith in the Spirit [*fides in spiritum*], through whom the fruit of both divine mercy [*divinae misericordiae*] and salvation completed in the Son [*salutis in filio completae*] is sealed [*obsignatur*] to us.²⁰

In the context of baptism, he adds a comment on our sanctification with a slightly altered form of the triad:

But we obtain regeneration by Christ's death and resurrection only if we are sanctified by the Spirit and imbued with a new and spiritual nature. For this reason we obtain and, so to speak, clearly discern in the Father the cause, in the Son the material, and in the Spirit the effect, of our purgation and our regeneration [*Quamobrem nostrae tum purgationis, tum regenerationis in patre causam, in filio materiam, in spiritu effectum quodammodo contemplamur*].²¹

To the list can be added the discussion on faith and election, which we reserve for later discussion. For Calvin, the members of the triad are so closely bound to one another that one or more of them can even be invoked to verify the rest:

Now we have disposed of the main issue in this discussion: If righteousness is supported by works, in God's sight it must entirely collapse: and it is confined solely to God's mercy, solely to communication of Christ, and therefore solely

²⁰ *Inst.* (1539) c.4 (*CO* 1:536).

²¹ *Inst.* (1539) c. 11 (*CO* 1:961).

to faith [*sola Dei misericordia, sola Christi communicatione, ideoque sola fide contineri*].²²

For our current topic, the impact of this theocentric conception is twofold. First, *communicatio Christi* as the way of imparting salvific benefits finds its proper place in the panoramic view of divine economy, fully co-ordinated with the basic Reformation tenets of *sola gratia, solus Christus* and *sola fide*. Secondly, it encourages Calvin to express more clearly the office of the Holy Spirit, particularly in parallel with that of Christ. In the 1536 edition, Calvin was more restrained when mentioning the office of the Spirit and quite often expressed it in an indirect manner as: God or Christ does this or that through the gifts of the Spirit. In the 1539 edition, he could write clearly: we cannot obtain this or that benefit of Christ's work unless the Spirit works this or that in us.²³ In other words, Calvin started to recognise the Holy Spirit as the effecting agent who makes Christ's works efficacious to the life of believers. These two strands were later fully integrated and became the overarching conception of the way of receiving Christ's benefits in the 1559 edition.

We now turn to Calvin's concern about assurance in his polemics against works righteousness.²⁴ For him, salvation must lead to firm and unwavering assurance. The

²² *Inst.* (1539) c. 6 (*CO* 1:769).

²³ For instance, *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (*CO* 1:536), c. 11 (*CO* 1:961); or c. 6 (*CO* 1:759): "Non enim ab immunditiis nostris purgari nos et ablui Paulus docet (1 Cor. 6:11) Christi sanguine, nisi dum purgationem illam spiritus in nobis efficit."

²⁴ For discussion on the theme of assurance in Calvin's thought, see also D. Foxgrover, "Temporary Faith and the Certainty of Salvation," *Calvin Theological Journal* 15 (1980) 220-232; A. N. S. Lane, "Calvin's Doctrine of Assurance," *Vox Evangelica* 11 (1979) 32-54; S. E. Schreiner, "'The Spiritual Man Judges All Things': Calvin and the Exegetical Debates About Certainty in the Reformation," in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*, R. A. Muller and J. L. Thompson (eds) (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans

notion of merits from human works is unacceptable, because human works will never be so perfect as to guarantee a full acceptance from God. As regards assurance, there are in turn two interrelated aspects, namely a reliable source of righteousness (i.e. objective side of assurance) and a peaceful state of conscience (i.e. subjective side of assurance). As far as the former is concerned, the spotlight of Calvin's arguments is beaming on phrases such as "outside us", "not in us". In this respect, communion with Christ serves not only as the common ground to co-ordinate justification and sanctification, but also as the extrinsic source of assurance. The highest pitch is heard when communion with Christ is regarded as the sure attestation of our eternal election, i.e. God the Father's merciful will before the foundation of the world (the efficient cause of our salvation):

First, if we seek God's fatherly mercy and kindly heart, we should turn our eyes to Christ, on whom alone the Father's spirit rests. If we seek salvation, life, and the immortality of the Heavenly Kingdom, then there is no other to whom we may flee, seeing that he alone is the fountain of life, the anchor of salvation, and the heir of the Kingdom of Heaven. Now what is the purpose of election but that we, adopted as sons by our Heavenly Father, may obtain salvation and immortality by his favour? ... Accordingly, those whom God has adopted as his sons are said to have been chosen not in themselves but in his Christ [*non in ipsis eos dicitur elegisse, sed in Christo suo*]; for unless he could love them in him, he could not honour them with the inheritance of his Kingdom if they had not previously become partakers of him. But if we have been chosen in him, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we conceive him as severed from his Son [*Quod si in eo sumus electi, non in nobis ipsis reperiemus electionis nostrae certitudinem; ac ne in Deo quidem patre, si nudum illum absque filio imaginamur*]. Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election. For since it is into his body the Father has destined those to be engrafted whom he has willed from eternity to be his own, that he may hold as sons all whom he acknowledges to be among his members, we have a sufficiently clear and firm testimony that we have been inscribed in the book of life if we are in communion with Christ [*Quum enim is sit, cuius corpori inserere destinavit pater quos ab aeterno voluit esse suos, ut pro filiis habeat quotquot inter eius membra recognoscit, satis*

Publishing Co., 1996) 189-215; R. C. Zachman, *The Assurance of Faith: Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993).

perspicuum firmumque testimonium habemus, nos in libro vitae scriptos esse, si cum Christo communicamus].²⁵

In contrast, when it turns to the subjective aspect of assurance, emphasis would switch to “not outside us”, “in us”. From the 1539 edition onwards, this subjective side of assurance has been integrated to the so-called complete definition of faith and its elaboration:

Here, indeed, is the chief hinge on which faith turns: that we do not regard the promises of mercy that God offers as true only outside ourselves, but not at all in us [*ne quas Dominus offert misericordiae promissiones extra nos tantum veras esse arbitremur, in nobis minime*]; rather that we make them ours by inwardly embracing them.²⁶

Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge [*firmam certamque cognitionem*] of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.²⁷

The objective revelation and promise of salvation is found in Christ, but it is the Holy Spirit who makes it efficacious to believers’ heart. While not forgetting the Spirit’s work upon human intellect, Calvin appealed to the Spirit even more as the agent of assurance:

But if it is true that the mind’s real understanding is illumination by the Spirit of God, then in such confirmation of the heart [*cordis confirmatione*] his power is much more clearly manifested, to the extent that the heart’s distrust is greater than the mind’s blindness. It is harder for the heart to be furnished with assurance [*animum securitate instrui*] than for the mind to be endowed with thought. The Spirit accordingly serves as a seal, to seal up in our hearts

²⁵ *Inst.* (1539) c. 8 (*CO* 1:880).

²⁶ *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (*CO* 1:458).

²⁷ *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (*CO* 1:456). For the development of the fiduciary element in Calvin’s notion of faith, see also B. Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See: Calvin's Doctrine of Faith in Its Exegetical Context* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

those very promises the certainty of which it has previously impressed upon our minds; and takes the place of a guarantee to confirm and establish them.²⁸

There is such a strong affinity between the christological and the pneumatological motifs of assurance that one can easily cross over to the working area of the other in the course of time. In fact, even this 1539 edition betrays some trace of development in this direction. For example, in refuting the accusation of presumption for a special assurance from the Spirit, which is regarded as rare by his Catholic opponents, Calvin insisted that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is actually common to all believers. Suggested by Pauline and Johannine traditions, he readily inferred the indwelling of Christ from that of the Holy Spirit:

But they [Schoolmen] contend that it is a matter of rash presumption for us to claim an undoubted knowledge of God's will. ... But they cry aloud that it is also great temerity on our part that we thus dare to glory in the Spirit of Christ. ... And these men would have it that those who are the children of God are moved by their own spirit, but empty of God's Spirit. ... Paul denies that those who are not moved by the Spirit of Christ are servants of Christ. These men devise a Christianity that does not require the Spirit of Christ. He holds out no hope of blessed resurrection unless we feel the Spirit dwelling in us [*nisi spiritum in nobis residentem sentiamus*]. These men invent a hope devoid of such a feeling. ... What, then, does he mean when he bids the Corinthians examine themselves whether they are in the faith, to prove themselves whether they have Christ? Unless one knows that Christ dwells in him, he is reprobate [*semet probare an Christum habeant, quem nisi quis in se habitantem cognoscat, reprobus est*] [2 Co. 13:5]. "Now we know," says John, "that he abides in us from the Spirit whom he has given us." [1 John 4:13]"²⁹

²⁸ *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (CO 1:469); also *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (CO 1:468): "And it will not be enough for the mind to be illumined by the Spirit of God unless the heart is also strengthened and supported by his power. In this matter the Schoolmen go completely astray, who in considering faith identify it with a bare and simple assent arising out of knowledge, and leave out confidence and assurance of heart."

²⁹ *Inst.* (1539) c. 4 (CO 1:470-1).

In Calvin's later writing, the subjective function of the Spirit's indwelling can be equally expressed in christological terms. This facilitates the final synthesis of the christological and pneumatological motifs in the matter of receiving Christ's benefits.

iii. Christ *extra nos*, and yet *in nobis*: the 1543 *Institutes*

The concern of assurance further widened the application of *communio Christi* in the 1543 edition of *Institutes*. Again, it was driven by polemics against Calvin's Catholic opponents. This time they were someone named by Calvin as "certain half-papists". It seems that these persons aimed at formulating some understanding of assurance, in which room is left for promoting believers' humility. According to Calvin, they agreed that the benefits of Christ are indeed full enough for good hope. However, it is equally proper for us to have fear when we contemplate our own unworthiness of all those benefits offered to us in Christ. For Calvin, this is no assurance at all:

In brief, they so set conscience between hope and fear that it alternates from one to the other intermittently and by turns. ... If, they say, you contemplate Christ, there is sure salvation: if you turn back to yourself, there is sure damnation. Therefore unbelief and good hope must alternately reign in your mind.³⁰

It is not Calvin's intent to deny the existence of fear as such. In fact, from the 1539 edition onwards, Calvin himself had paid much attention to the reality of fear in believers' heart and even attributed positive value to it. What he really repudiated is the understanding of salvation behind it:

³⁰ *Inst.* (1543) c. 5 (*CO* 1:463).

As if we ought to think of Christ, standing afar off and not rather dwelling in us [*Quasi vero Christum veluti procul stantem, et non potius in nobis habitantem debeamus cogitare*]! For we await salvation from him not because he appears to us afar off, but because he makes us, ingrafted into his body, participants not only in all his benefits but also in himself. ... It is surely the case that we ought not to separate Christ from ourselves or ourselves from Him [*sic est sane: Christum a nobis separare, aut nos ab ipso, minime convenit*]. ... Christ is not outside us but dwells within us [*quia Christus non extra nos est, sed in nobis habitat*]. Not only does he cleave to us by an indivisible bond of fellowship, but with a wonderful communion [*mirabili quadam communione*], day by day, he grows more and more into one body with us, until he becomes completely one with us.³¹

In other words, if we are really convinced that Christ's benefits are indeed full enough for good hope, we are already brought into communion with Christ, i.e. Christ is dwelling in us. Because of this indwelling, we cannot contemplate our situation in such a way that Christ's worthiness has nothing to do with our unworthiness. For believers, Christ's salvation is not a static thing standing out there; quite the contrary, His salvation is vigorously "swallowing" [*absorbet*] and "wiping out" [*abolet*] their condemnation, His righteousness is "overwhelming" [*obruit*] their sins and He with His worthiness is "intervening" [*intercedit*] against their unworthiness in their lives, bringing them unwavering assurance.³²

The idea of a Christ acting for us is not entirely new for Calvin. It can well reach back to the 1536 edition, in which Christian faith is defined as one which not only acknowledges the historical veracity of Christ, but also trusts Him as the saviour and intercessor really for us. What is new here is how Calvin explicitly ascribed to

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

communion with Christ the function of assuring believers' heart. In the final analysis, Calvin was employing christological indwelling language to express a well-established pneumatological motif, i.e. how the promise and hope of salvation becomes real to us and thus brings forth assurance in our heart.³³ The application of *communio Christi* is then shifted from the source of righteousness *extra nos* to the intercessor *in nobis*.

The function of Christ's indwelling is almost identical with that of the Holy Spirit. As in the previous edition, Calvin heavily relied on Rom. 8:10 to provide the scriptural proof for their close proximity. Although Calvin had not yet clearly expressed the role of the Spirit in Christ's indwelling, his consistent use of the Pauline texts shows that he not only employed them as proof-texts for the polemics, but also really digested them and drew nourishment from them to tackle new theological challenge. As the common engrafting language between justification and sanctification paved the way for their unity on *communio Christi*, so the common indwelling language called for a further integration of the christological notion and its pneumatological counterpart. This took place in the final edition in 1559.

³³ Schreiner notices that there is important difference between Calvin and the earlier reformers like Luther and Zwingli, in that Calvin made explicit uses of communion elements in Pauline and Johannine writings to lay a foundation for certitude, while his predecessors had treated them only as subordinate or implicit elements in defending certitude of salvation (Schreiner 209). We would like to add that communion elements in Pauline and Johannine writings, especially the indwelling language, not only lay the objective foundation for certitude, but also provide a bridge for the christological motif to cross over to the working area of its pneumatological counterpart.

iv. Final integration: the 1559 *Institutes*

This definitive edition of Calvin's *opus magnum* was markedly different from its predecessors. For our current topic, it also marked the end of a development. Structurally speaking, the four parts of the exposition of the Apostles' Creed in the preceding editions were broken up and respectively distributed to the four books of the new edition. While there is still no consensus as to Calvin's overall theological intention behind this striking redaction, what is of particular interest to our investigation is the treatment of the exposition of the third article. Calvin reworked it into the leading chapter of Book Three. However, quite contrary to his usual practice, our author suppressed quite a number of the existing materials and rearranged the rest into the new material in such a radical manner that the cast of the original exposition can hardly be felt. The result of this reworking was the synthesis of "communion with Christ" and "the Holy Spirit as bond", which forms the common ground for receiving salvific benefits:

It is true that we obtain this by faith. Yet since we see that not all indiscriminately embrace that communion with Christ which is offered through the gospel, reason itself teaches us to climb higher and to examine into the secret energy of the Spirit [*arcana spiritus efficacia*], by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits.³⁴

To sum up, the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself [*Huc summa redit, spiritum sanctum vinculum esse, quo nos sibi efficaciter devincit Christus*].³⁵

But he [Christ] unites himself to us by the Spirit alone. By the grace and power of the same Spirit we are made his members, to keep us under himself and for us in turn to possess him [*solo autem spiritu unit se nobiscum*].

³⁴ *Inst.* (1559) III, 1, 1 (CO 2:393).

³⁵ *Inst.* (1559) III, 1, 1 (CO 2:394).

Eiusdem spiritus gratia et virtute efficimur illius membra, ut nos sub se contineat vicissimque illum possideamus].³⁶

This synthesis cannot be regarded as a sudden change in Calvin's thought. As we have seen in previous chapter, early in the 1539 *Institutes* Calvin had already employed the notion "the Holy Spirit as bond" in the context of eucharistic teachings to handle the spatial barrier between Christ and believers. Even in his teaching about justification in the same edition, though not as clear as his eucharistic teaching, there was observed a strong affinity between the offices of Christ and the Holy Spirit. This latent connexion between the christological and pneumatological motifs was finally brought to light in the 1559 edition. This development was probably stimulated by the challenge of Osiander's doctrine of essential righteousness, as well as the corresponding notion of essential indwelling of Christ.³⁷ According to Calvin's own analysis, Osiander's doctrine of justification had two major arguments:

For in this whole disputation the noun "righteousness" and the verb "to justify" are extended in two directions; so that to be justified is not only to be reconciled to God through free pardon but also to be made righteous, and righteousness is not a free imputation but the holiness and uprightness that the essence of God, dwelling in us, inspires. Secondly, he sharply states that Christ is himself our righteousness, not in so far as he, by expiating sins as Priest, appeased the Father on our behalf, but as he is eternal God and life.³⁸

³⁶ *Inst.* (1559) III, 1, 3 (CO 2:396).

³⁷ There was a compelling need for Calvin to differentiate his own notion of communion with Christ from that of Osiander, for his Lutheran critics accused him of following the latter's teaching. See *Ultima Admonitio ad Westphalum* (1557) (CO 9:246) T&T II 488; also *Dilucida explicatio sanae doctrinae de vera participatione carnis et sanguinis Christi in sacra coena ad discutiendas Heshusii nebulas* (1561) (CO 9:504), LCC XXII 308.

³⁸ *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 6 (CO 2:537).

Hence, Osiander repudiated the forensic notion of justification by teaching a notion of communion with Christ or indwelling of Christ, in which our own being is actually made holy and thus acceptable to God by the transfusion of the righteousness of His divine essence. Calvin saw two serious problems in this eccentric notion of justification. First, Christ was said to perform His justifying work according to the divine nature alone. This unavoidably “would lead us away from the priesthood of Christ and the person of the Mediator to his eternal deity”.³⁹ Secondly, the distinction between justification and sanctification was blurred. As Calvin’s catholic opponents, Osiander had a valid concern about the unity of justification and sanctification. However, since sanctification or newness of life would never be complete throughout our whole life, the righteousness intrinsic to believers should not be confused with the imputed righteousness needed for our total acceptance before God. This would unavoidably jeopardise the total assurance of salvation, for “no portion of righteousness sets our consciences at peace until it has been determined that we are pleasing to God, because we are entirely righteous before him”.⁴⁰

To rectify these errors, Calvin should not only reaffirm the crucial place of Christ’s humanity in the dispensation of salvation, but also clearly ascribe Christ’s justifying works to the office of the Mediator rather than the divine essence as such:

³⁹ *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 8 (*CO* 2:538). We follow Beveridge’s selection to read “aeternum” (eternal) rather than Battles’ “externum” (outward). See note on *CO* 2:538.

⁴⁰ *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 11 (*CO* 2:541-3). Also, “Assuredly, he [a sinner] will hang uncertainly, wavering to this side and to that, for he will not be allowed to assume in himself as much righteousness as he needs for assurance.” *ibid.* at 543.

Let us note that it is the Father who is speaking; that he assigns to the Son the office of justifying; ... Hence I gather that Christ was made righteousness when “he took upon him the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7); secondly, that he justifies us in that he has shown himself obedient to the Father (Phil. 2:8). Therefore he does this for us not according to his divine nature but in accordance with the dispensation enjoined upon him.⁴¹

Correspondingly, our understanding of the common ground for both justification and sanctification, i.e. communion with Christ, should also be shifted from the realm of essence to that of the office or person of the Mediator. This reinforced the same theological instinct as found in the *extra Calvinisticum*: distinction should be maintained in the realm of essence, while unity is shifted to the realm of office. Communion with Christ therefore does not mean that there is a direct mixing or exchange of properties between Christ’s divine essence and our own. Rather, “the Holy Spirit as bond” comes in to effect the unity in distinction:

Indeed, he [Osiander] accumulates many testimonies of Scripture by which to prove that Christ is one with us, and we, in turn, with him – a fact that needs no proof. But because he does not observe that bond of this unity [*huius unitatis vinculum*], he deceives himself. Now it is easy for us to resolve all his difficulties. For we hold ourselves to be united with Christ by the secret power of his Spirit [*nos cum Christo uniri arcana spiritus eius virtute*].⁴²

For the fact that it comes about through the power of the Holy Spirit that we grow together with Christ, and he becomes our Head and we his members, he [Osiander] reckons of almost no importance unless Christ’s essence be mingled with ours [*Nam virtute spiritus sancti fieri ut coalescamus cum Christo, nobisque sit caput, et nos eius membra, fere pro nihilo ducit, nisi eius essentia nobis misceatur*].⁴³

⁴¹ *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 8 (*CO* 2:539).

⁴² *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 5 (*CO* 2:536).

⁴³ *ibid.*

Although Calvin vigorously refuted Osiander's notions of essential righteousness and essential indwelling of Christ, he could show sympathy to the latter's anxiety that imputation of righteousness might be misrepresented in such a way that Christ and his works might be reduced to something neutral or indifferent to our life, i.e. something we could keep a safe distance and "contemplate outside ourselves from afar".⁴⁴ When Calvin himself incorporated this notion of *communio Christi vinculo Spiritus* to the first chapter of Book Three as the common ground for imparting all salvific benefits, the first thing he wanted to avoid was any interpretation along this erroneous direction:

How do we receive those benefits which the Father bestowed on his only-begotten Son ... ? First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him [*quamdiu extra nos est Christus et ab eo sumus separati*], all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us [*Ergo ut nobiscum quae a patre accepit communicet, nostrum fieri et in nobis habitare oportet*]. For this reason, he is called "our Head" [Eph 4:15] ... We also, in turn, are said to be "engrafted into him" [Rom 11:17], and to "put on Christ" [Gal 3:27]; for, as I have said, all that he possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with him.⁴⁵

However, the antidote was not to be sought in the realm of essence as Osiander had proposed, but in the work of the Holy Spirit:

As has already been clearly explained, until our minds become intent upon the Spirit, Christ, so to speak, lies idle because we coldly contemplate him as

⁴⁴ *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 10 (CO 2:540): "Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts – in short, that mystical union – are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body – in short, because he deigns to make us one with him. For this reason, we glory that we have fellowship of righteousness with him."

⁴⁵ *Inst.* (1559) III, 1, 1 (CO 2:393).

outside ourselves – indeed far from us [*donec intentae sint in spiritum mentes nostrae, Christum iacere quodammodo otiosum: quia frigide eum extra nos, adeoque procul a nobis speculamur*]. ... This union alone ensures that, as far as we are concerned, he has not unprofitably come with the name of Saviour.⁴⁶

Here, it should also be noted that the indwelling language, the contemplation of a Christ “lying idle, remaining outside of us, being far from us”, the personal assurance through the union; all these elements hark back to the polemic passage against the anonymous half-papists in the 1543 edition. But with one step forwards, Calvin now made explicit the correlation between the christological and the pneumatological offices: through the indwelling of the Spirit, Christ is not far from us but dwells in us; or, in the secret works of the Spirit, Christ is not idle but works in us. As in the case of the previous editions, this correlation of Christ’s indwelling with that of the Holy Spirit again heavily relies on the eighth chapter of Romans and Johannine writings for scriptural support:

Paul says: “You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his” [Rom 8:9]. Hence, he arouses hope of a full renewal “because he who raised Christ from the dead will quicken our mortal bodies, because of his Spirit that dwells in us” [Rom. 8:11p].⁴⁷

Paul shows the Spirit to be the inner teacher by whose effort the promise of salvation penetrates into our minds, a promise that would otherwise only strike the air or beat upon our ears. ... John explains this more clearly: “We know that he abides in us from the Spirit whom he has given us” [1 John 3:24]. Likewise, “From this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit” [1 John 4:13].⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Inst.* (1559) III, 1, 3 (*CO* 2:396).

⁴⁷ *Inst.* (1559) III, 1, 2 (*CO* 2:395).

⁴⁸ *Inst.* (1559) III, 1, 4 (*CO* 2:396).

The polemics against Osiander actually picked up all Calvin's previous polemic and exegetical efforts to arrive at a comprehensive account of imparting salvific benefits: Christ communicates all the benefits by the bond or virtue of the Holy Spirit (*communio Christi vinculo Spiritus*). In the power of the Spirit *habitans in nobis*, the Christ *extra nos* becomes the Christ *habitans in nobis*. We receive all the benefits only through receiving this Christ *habitans*. In turn, we receive Him only in the power of the Spirit *habitans*, whose principal work is faith.⁴⁹ The extrinsic character of *solus Christus* and the personal character of *sola fide* are both preserved and co-ordinated by the mediating principle of *solus Spiritus*.

After tracing the development of the notion of *communio Christi vinculo Spiritus*, we will then proceed to examine in detail what functions Calvin ascribed to the Holy Spirit in imparting the benefits of Christ.

⁴⁹ *ibid.* Also *Inst.* (1559) III, 2, 35 (*CO* 2:427) "Huc redit summa, Christum, ubi nos in fidem illuminat spiritus sui virtute, simul inserere in corpus suum, ut fiamus bonorum omnium participes."

II. Holy Spirit as Bond in imparting Christ's benefits

i. Distinctive offices of Christ and the Spirit

For Calvin, salvation can be understood as a process of communication of God's righteousness and all his blessings to His elect. In this process, Christ is the sole Mediator appointed by the Father, in that life and righteousness of God are conferred upon him so as to be revealed and made accessible to us through His accommodation, i.e. manifestation in the flesh. In executing his appointed office, the incarnate Son "personalises" God the Father and unites believers to Him. Through Christ and His works of reconciliation, God is no longer to us a strange God in His inaccessible light, nor a wrathful God in His hatred towards our sins, but the merciful Father who shows His unchangeable love to the elect before the foundation of the world. In this sense, Calvin called Christ the bond between the Father and us:

[the love of God,] which is in Christ Jesus, i.e. of which Christ is the bond [*vinculum*]. He is the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased. If, therefore, we cleave to God by Him, we are assured of God's unchangeable and unwearied kindness towards us [*certi sumus de inflexibili et indefessa Dei in nos benevolentia*]. Paul now speaks here more plainly than above, placing the fountain of love in the Father, and affirming that it flows to us from Christ.⁵⁰

He [Paul] declares, accordingly, that we are blessed through Christ alone, inasmuch as He is the bond of our union with God [*vinculum nostrae cum Deo coniunctionis*], and, on the other hand, that, apart from Him, we are most miserable, because we are shut out from God.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Comm. on Rom. 8:39 (*COR* II 13:185) *CCNT* 189.

⁵¹ Comm. on Col. 1:20 (*CO* 52:88) *CCNT* 312. See also Comm. on John 5:26-27, Col. 1:19, 2 Cor. 13:14.

In using the word “bond”, Calvin meant to strengthen his readers’ confidence by pointing to the fact that our oneness with God is firmly built upon the oneness between the Father and the Son. However, it should be noted that this eternal foundation of oneness is controlled by the functional character of the mediatorial office in Calvin’s thought. Calvin was quite consistently reluctant to appeal to the immanent Trinity as the ground of the unity. In expounding the mutual indwelling between the Father and Christ, Calvin drew our attention from essential unity to unity in divine power:

That I am in the Father, and the Father in me. I do not refer these words to Christ’s divine essence, but to the mode of the revelation [*Haec verba non ad divinam Christi essentiam refero, sed ad modum revelationis*]. ... But as Christ does not simply declare what He is in Himself, but what we should acknowledge Him to be, it records His power rather than His essence [*Sed quia non simpliciter disputat Christus, quis sit in se, sed qualis debeat agnosci a nobis, virtutis potius quam essentiae elogium est*]. Therefore, the Father is said to be in Christ because in Him full divinity dwells and displays its power. And Christ, in His turn, is said to be in the Father, because by His divine power He shows that He is one with the Father.⁵²

For Calvin, this unity in power is an authentication of Christ’s commission. He was not tired of accusing ancient commentators of speculating too much on the unknowable essence of the Godhead and thus missing this all-important aspect:

The old writers have twisted this passage round to Christ’s divine essence, as if He were said to be sealed in that He is the stamp and express image of the Father. Here He is not critically discussing his eternal essence, but says what He has been commissioned and enjoined to do, what His office is towards us and what we ought to seek and look for from Him [*Neque enim hic de aeterna*

⁵² Comm. on John 14:10 (CO 47:326) CCNT 78-9.

*sua essentia subtiliter disserit, sed quid sibi mandatum sit et iniunctum, quid habeat erga nos officii, et quid petere a se et sperare debeamus].*⁵³

Even the title “beloved Son” should not be understood directly from the eternal loving relationship between the Father and the Son, but from his appointed office of being the Mediator and Head of the Church:

Those who imagine that He [Christ] here speaks of the secret love of God the Father which He always had towards the Son, philosophise beside the point. Rather, it was Christ’s design to place, so to say, in our bosom a sure pledge of the divine love towards us [*certum divini amoris erga nos pignus*] . Therefore that subtlety as to how the Father always loved Himself in the Son has nothing to do with this passage. The love mentioned here must be referred to us, because Christ declares that the Father loves Him as the Head of the Church – a thing extremely necessary for us [*Sed amor cuius hic fit mentio ad nos referendus est, quia se diligere a patre testatur Christus quatenus est ecclesiae caput, sicuti plus quam necesse nobis est*]. For he who seeks to be loved by God without the Mediator gets involved in a labyrinth in which he will find neither the right path nor the way out. We should therefore direct our gaze to Christ, in whom will be found the pledge of the divine love. For the love of God was poured out on Him completely, that it might flow from Him to His members. He was marked out by this title, that He was the beloved Son in whom the Father’s will is satisfied. But we must notice the end – that in Him God may look upon us as pleasing. Thus in Him, as in a mirror, we may behold God’s fatherly love towards us all, since He is not loved separately, or for His own private advantage, but that He may unite us along with Himself to the Father.⁵⁴

Therefore, that Christ is one with the Father, that He is His express image, and that He is His beloved Son, all these are not private matters of the eternal Son, but have a “reference to us” because they lead us to Christ’s office of reconciliation. The eternal decree of election and its corresponding appointment of Christ as the way of

⁵³ Comm. on John 6:27 (CO 47:140) CCNT 154. See also Comm. on 2 Cor. 4:4; 4:6; Col. 1:15. Consistently Calvin commented that the Fathers, owing to the Arian controversy, wrongly interpreted the christological title in relation to the divine essence and neglected its “reference to us”, which is definitely more important in his view.

⁵⁴ Comm. on John 15:9 (CO 47:342) CCNT 97. See also Comm. on John 5:20; 17:23.

reconciliation is the upper bound set down by Calvin for a disciplined search for the divine matter.⁵⁵ In other words, Calvin consistently drew our attention from the conventional enquiry on divine essence to the functional aspect of Christ's works. This is of significance, particularly when it is noted that Calvin's understanding of Johannine indwelling language is constitutive to his own notion of communion in imparting salvific benefits. In fact, Calvin himself was quite aware of the fact that the nature of Christ's mutual indwelling with the Father will unavoidably be linked up with that of our mutual indwelling with Christ:

In that day [ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.] ... For the drift of these words is that we cannot know by idle speculation what is the sacred and mystic union between us and Him and again between Him and the Father, but that the only way to know it is when He pours His life into us by the secret efficacy of the Spirit [Nam huc verba tendunt, non posse otiosa speculatione cognosci, qualis sit sacra et mystica inter nos et ipsum unio, qualis rursum inter ipsum et patrem; sed hunc unum eius noscendae modum esse, quum vitam suam arcana spiritus efficacia in nos diffundit].⁵⁶

In other words, as Christ's communion with the Father should be understood in the light of His office as Mediator and Head of the church, so our communion with Him should also be seen in the same light. For Calvin, the category of communion serves that of office, not vice versa. Thanks to this functional emphasis, Calvin did not find any problem in employing both forensic and communion languages in describing our

⁵⁵ In commenting on John 17:23, Calvin acknowledged that there was a wonderful mercy or love of God towards the unworthy even before the appointment; however, he shied away from speaking too much about it for he thought that this love is far too incomprehensible for human mind and hidden in the bosom of God (CO 47:388-9; CCNT 149-150). For the relationship between the eternal decree and the work of Christ, see also R. A. Muller, "Predestination and Christology in the Thought of Calvin," chap. in *Christ and the Decree* (Durham, North Carolina: Labyrinth Press, 1986) 17-38.

⁵⁶ Comm. on John 14:20 (CO 47:331) CCNT 84.

receiving the benefits. In his first exegetical work, the 1540 Commentary on Romans, Calvin could expound the biblical concept of “righteousness” in both languages. It seems that for him both of them are equally eligible in expressing the personal relationship established between the office-bearer and his beneficiaries:

Abraham, therefore, seized the kindness of God which was offered to him in the promise, and by which he perceived that righteousness was being communicated to him [*sibi iustitiam communicari sentiebat*]. In order to determine the meaning of righteousness, it is necessary to understand this relation between promise and faith, for there is the same relationship between God and us as juridically exists between donor and beneficiary [*quoniam eadem est hic inter Deum et nos ratio, quae apud Iurisconsultos inter datorem et donatarium*].⁵⁷

He understands that only God ought to be praised as righteous. Then the fullness of righteousness and benevolence [*iustitiae ac bonitatis amplitudo*] brings to light, in that He also pours out the communication of them [*eius communicationem effundit*] into men. For whoever are righteous are justified in no other way than by the faith of Christ: for all are otherwise wicked. Therefore, they are justified, because they are reckoned righteous, though they are not righteous [*quia iusti censentur, etiamsi non sunt*]: as long as the obedience of Christ is imputed [*imputatur*] to them into righteousness.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Comm. on Rom. 4:3 (COR II 13:81) CCNT 84. We change the translation of the rare word “donatarium” from “recipient” to “beneficiary”. See Du Cange, *Glossarium* Vol. III, s.v. “donatarius” and “donatorius”, both should read “Is cui aliquid donatur”. Clearly Calvin had in mind the donor and the beneficiary in the context of legal matter. In comparing Calvin’s position regarding justification in the 1539 *Institutes* with that of Article 5 of the Regensburg Colloquy, Lane comments, “Ironically, at this point Calvin’s language is more ‘Catholic’ than Article 5. The article states that we are not accepted and reconciled ‘propter dignitatem seu perfectionem iustitiae nobis in Christo communicatae’. The basis for acceptance is iustitia imputata, not iustitia communicata, which could be seen as a synonym for iustitia inhaerens. But Calvin states that faith justifies ‘quia in *communicationem* iustitiae Christi nos inducit’ (Inst. 3:11:20 – my emphasis). This is not to suggest that Calvin did not, in 1539, have imputed righteousness in mind, but it does indicate that he was not then as careful in his choice of wording as were the drafters of Article 5.” (A. N. S. Lane, “Calvin and Article 5 of the Regensburg Colloquy,” (2002), unpublished paper presented at the 2002 International Congress for Calvin Research, 15; material taken from an unpublished title: *Compromising Patchwork or Ecumenical Breakthrough? The Regensburg Article on Justification (1541): Introduction, Text and Commentary*.) Lane’s observation should not be limited by the year 1539. In fact, Calvin had never been so careful in his choice of wording. Throughout his life, for the matter of justification iustitia communicata is nothing but iustitia imputata, while believers’ iustitia vera, which is Calvin’s preferred word for iustitia inhaerens, is communicated as the gift of sanctification, which should be clearly differentiated from justification.

⁵⁸ 1540 Comm. on Rom 3:26 (COR II 13:75). In analysing Calvin’s understanding of atonement and righteousness in the 1540 Commentary on Romans, Santmire suggests that Calvin’s notion of atonement contains the ideas of both propitiation and expiation, where the former stands for the vertical, theocentric aspect of appeasing the offended Divine majesty while the latter the horizontal, anthropocentric aspect of

This office-Christology, together with its “non-essential” notion of indwelling, is consolidated by a corresponding office-pneumatology in Calvin’s thought. Christ of course performed all his reconciling works and continues to bring life to us out of his divinity. However, Calvin did not allow the divine essence to come “nakedly” to the forefront:

When He [Christ] says, *I will come unto you*, He shows the manner in which He dwells in His people and fills all things – by the power of His Spirit [*quomodo in suis habitat atque impleat omnia: nempe spiritus sui virtute*]. It is therefore clear that the grace of the Spirit is a striking testimony to His divinity [*spiritus gratiam insigne esse divinitatis eius testimonium*].⁵⁹

We are said to be in him because, grafted into His body, we are partakers of all His righteousness and all his blessings. He is said to be in us because He plainly shows by the efficacy of His Spirit that He is the author and cause of our life [*Ipse in nobis esse dicitur, quia spiritus sui efficacia clare demonstrat, se nobis esse vitae autorem et causam*].⁶⁰

And if Christ in you. Paul now applied his previous remarks concerning the Spirit [i.e. indwelling of the Spirit] to Christ, in order to signify the manner of Christ’s dwelling in us [*quo significatur modus habitationis Christi in nobis*]. For as by the Spirit He consecrates us as temples to Himself, so by the same

purging the sin of the creature. He then writes, “As there is a propitiatory and an expiatory aspect to the Atonement, so there is a forensic and a participating aspect to the believers’ righteousness. ... Calvin uses the word ‘imputation’ to designate the way in which the believer is perfectly righteous. By imputation of righteousness, he means *both* God’s pronouncing the believer righteous (that is the forensic aspect) *and* God’s giving the believer actual communion with the righteousness of Christ (that is the participating aspect).” (Santmire 299-303). Santmire admits that for neither the atonement nor the righteousness is found any explicit differentiation in Calvin’s writing and explains away this lack of textual evidence by asserting that “he [Calvin] holds that they are exhibited together in Christ”. We are not convinced by this reasoning, for Calvin is particularly keen on articulating “united but differentiated” pairs of ideas such as justification-sanctification, faith-hope, sacramental sign-reality, etc. Their unity in Christ is no reason for Calvin not to explicitly differentiate them if they really constitute distinguishable aspects. We would prefer to hold the more proven view of understanding “imputation” as a forensic term and suggest that the forensic and participating languages do not point respectively to “two ideas” but jointly to one reality of Christ’s office.

⁵⁹ Comm. on John 14:18 (CO 47:330) CCNT 83.

⁶⁰ Comm. on John 14:20 (CO 47:331) CCNT 84.

Spirit He dwells in us [*nam ut per spiritum sibi nos in templa consecrat, ita per eundem in nobis residet*].⁶¹

Therefore, the divine power, in authenticating Christ's commission as well as communicating God's blessings through His indwelling, is ascribed to the person of the Holy Spirit, instead of the divine essence as such. As Christ "personalises" God to be our merciful Father and unites us to Him, so the Spirit "personalises" Christ to be the present Redeemer and Intercessor and unites us to Him. In this sense, the title "bond" can be equally ascribed to the Holy Spirit:

the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.⁶²

*sed eam [iustitiam] obtinemus tum demum, cum in Christi consortium recepti sumus – vinculo Spiritus, illi sociati; ubi autem Spiritus, illic regeneratio.*⁶³

Apparently, the role of the Spirit overlapped with that of Christ. In expounding the Johannine title of "another Paraclete", Calvin admitted that the Spirit shares the same office of Christ as our patron:

The word Comforter is here applied to both Christ and the Spirit; and justly, for it is an office common to both to comfort and exhort and guard us by their patronage. Christ was the Patron of His own so long as He lived in the world. Afterwards He committed them to the protection and guardianship of the Spirit.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Comm. on Rom. 8:10 (*COR II 13:161*) *CCNT* 165. See also *Inst.* (1559) III, 11, 5 (*CO 2:536*) "For the fact that it comes about through the power of the Holy Spirit that we grow together with Christ, and he comes our Head and we his members, he [Osiander] reckons of almost no importance unless Christ's essence be mingled with ours."; 1555 letter (2266) to Peter Martyr (*CO 15:723*) "Hence it is the Spirit who makes Christ to dwell in us, to sustain us, to quicken us, and to fulfil all the offices of the Head."

⁶² *Inst.* (1559) III, 1, 1 (*CO 2:393-4*).

⁶³ 1540 Comm. on Rom. 8:4 (*COR II 13:156*).

⁶⁴ Comm. on John 14:16 (*CO 47:329*) *CCNT* 82.

However, does it imply that the Holy Spirit is another Mediator behind the Mediator and is thus in practice the true Revealer and Redeemer? To avoid violating the axiom of *solus Christus*, Calvin tried to justify their peculiarity by appealing to different states of Christ's office throughout the economy. The peculiar office of the Spirit is therefore to make the invisible state of Christ's office present to us:

If it is asked whether we today are not still under the patronage of Christ, the answer is easy. Christ is a continual Patron, but not in a visible manner [*Christum esse perpetuum patronum, sed non visibili modo*]. While He dwelt in the world, He openly manifested Himself as their Patron. Now He guards us by His Spirit [*nunc vero per spiritum suum nos tutatur*]. ... Christ's proper work was to appease the wrath of God by atoning for the sins of the world, to redeem men from death and to procure righteousness and life. The Spirit's proper work is to make us partakers not only of Christ Himself, but of all His blessings.⁶⁵

In the name of the Lord Jesus, [and in the Spirit of God]. Paul makes a proper and judicious distinction between functions [*Proprie et eleganter distinguit inter officia*]. For the blood of Christ is the cause of our cleansing; from His death and resurrection we obtain righteousness and sanctification. But since the cleansing which Christ has carried out and the obtaining of righteousness are of no benefit to any except those who have been made to share in those blessings by the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul is quite right in speaking of the Spirit along with Christ. Christ, therefore, is the source of every blessing to us; it is from Him that we obtain everything. But Christ Himself, with all His blessings, is communicated to us by His Spirit [*sed Christus ipse cum omnibus suis bonis per spiritum nobis communicatur*].⁶⁶

Therefore, both now and then, all the salvific benefits (i.e. righteousness and sanctification) have been attained and revealed in Christ's atoning office. In it, the office of the Spirit always finds its source and goal, so that there can thus be no question of the one being displaced by the other:

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Comm. on 1 Cor. 6:11 (CO 49:395) CCNT 127.

For it was to teach us that the role of the Holy Spirit was simply to establish Christ's kingdom and to maintain and confirm for ever all that the Father had given Him. ... For what does He bestow on us? To be cleansed by Christ's blood; sin to be blotted out in us by His death; our old man to be crucified; His resurrection to be efficacious in reforming us to newness of life; and, in short, to become partakers of His blessing. Therefore, the Spirit bestows on us nothing apart from Christ; but He takes from Christ what He sheds on us [*Ergo nihil seorsum a Christo spiritus nobis confert, sed a Christo sumit quod in nos transfundat*]. We should think the same of His teaching; for He does not enlighten us to draw us away from Christ in the slightest degree, but to fulfil what Paul says, 'Christ is made unto us wisdom' [1 Co 1:30]. Similarly, to display those treasures which are hidden in Christ. In a word, the Spirit bestows on us no other riches than those of Christ, that He may bring out His glory in all things [*In summa, non aliis quam Christi divitiis nos locupletat spiritus, ut eius gloriam per omnia illustret*].⁶⁷

That Christ may dwell. ... For since the Father placed in Christ the fullness of all gifts, so he who has Christ dwelling in him can want nothing. They are mistaken who hope the Spirit can be obtained apart from obtaining Christ; and they are equally foolish and absurd who dream that Christ can be received without the Spirit. Both must be believed. We are partakers of the Holy Spirit to the extent that we share in Christ [*eatenus nos fieri spiritus sancti participes, quatenus Christo communicamus*]; for the Spirit will be found nowhere but in Christ, on whom He is said to have rested for that purpose. Nor can Christ be separated from His Spirit; for then He would be, so to say, dead and empty of His power [*nec Christum a spiritu suo posse divelli, ut sit quasi mortuus et vacuus sua virtute*].⁶⁸

Throughout his discussion, Calvin was very cautious to maintain this intricate relationship and differentiation between the offices of Christ and the Spirit. For him, we cannot really understand the meaning of the Spirit's works without at the same time taking Christ's into consideration. This is also true when we turn to the principal works of the Spirit in imparting salvific benefits, namely illumination of faith and regeneration to newness of life.

⁶⁷ Comm. on John 16:14 (CO 47:363-4) CCNT 121-2.

⁶⁸ Comm. on Eph. 3:17 (CO 51:186) CCNT 167.

ii. Illumination and sealing of the Holy Spirit

As mentioned above, it is Christ's office, with His atoning death and resurrection, which brings forth the double grace of justification and sanctification. Through the office of the Holy Spirit, the Mediator is "personalised" to us so that He can be said to dwell and work in us. This living relationship between the Mediator and His members calls for a corresponding personal response on the human side. For Calvin, this subjective elevation or preparation for the benefits is nothing but faith in Christ, which was honoured to be the instrumental cause of our salvation:

Paul well defines those who are endowed with the spiritual power of God as those in whom Christ dwells. Also, he points out that part which is the true seat of Christ, our hearts [*Partem etiam designat, ubi legitima est Christi sedes, nempe cor*], to show that it is not enough for Him to be on our tongues or flutter in our brains. He dwells, he says, by faith [*Habitat, inquit, per fidem*]. He also expresses the method by which so great a benefit is obtained. ... By faith, we not only acknowledge that Christ suffered for us and rose from the dead for us, but we receive Him, possessing and enjoying Him as He offers Himself to us. Most consider fellowship with Christ and believing in Christ to be the same thing; but the fellowship which we have with Christ is the effect of faith.⁶⁹

In other words, communion with Christ is regarded as the effect of faith. It is not always so easy to draw the dividing lines between faith, communion and benefits. As in the passage quoted above, Calvin could also describe the communion as a benefit. Elsewhere, he could even admit that faith itself is the fruit of sanctification.⁷⁰ However,

⁶⁹ Comm. on Eph. 3:17 (CO 51:186-7) CCNT 167-8.

⁷⁰ Comm. on John 1:13 (CO 47:12-3) CCNT 19.

his basic teaching is to ascribe a logical, though not temporal, priority to faith. Moreover, as shown before, Calvin's account of receiving salvific benefits took shape from defending faith righteousness against works righteousness. The crux of his thought was to do enough justice to the relation between faith and the accompanying benefit of sanctification, whereas the benefit of justification is self-evidently assumed in the formation of faith. In this sense, the work of the Holy Spirit in the formation of faith can be properly taken as His role in imparting justification.⁷¹

With respect to the formation of faith, the office of the Holy Spirit is also closely coupled with that of Christ. For Calvin, Christ was bringing forth an external, objective enlightening, while the Holy Spirit an internal, subjective one:

We should carefully note the twofold enlightening [*duplicem illuminationem*] to which he [Paul] is here referring. For there is first the enlightening of the Gospel and then also that secret enlightening which takes place in our hearts [*Unam evangelii; alternam arcanam, quae fit in cordibus*]. For as in His creation of the world God has poured forth upon us the brightness of the sun and has also given us eyes with which to receive it, so in our redemption He shines forth upon us in the person of His Son by His Gospel, but that would be in vain, since we are blind, unless He were also to illuminate our minds by His Spirit [*ita redemptor in filii persona per evangelium nobis quidem illucet; verum quia caeci sumus, id frustra fieret, nisi spiritu quoque suo mentes nostras illuminaret*].⁷²

This internal enlightening, or more precisely healing, involves all psychological faculties. Although Calvin did not commit to a specific theory of the human soul, he heuristically adopted the view that it is chiefly composed of two parts, namely intellect

⁷¹ Comm. on 1 Cor. 6:11 (CO 49:395) "Fide enim recipimus Christum, et eius gratiae nobis applicantur. Fidei autor spiritus."

⁷² Comm. on 2 Cor. 4:6 (CO 50:53) CCNT 57.

and heart.⁷³ For the intellect, the Holy Spirit illuminates it to the knowledge of the Gospel; while for the heart, He seals it with a firm conviction:

the effect of the Spirit in faith is twofold, corresponding to the two chief parts of which faith consists. It enlightens the intellect and also confirms the heart. The commencement of faith is knowledge; its completion is a firm and steady conviction, which admits of no opposing doubt [*Initium fidei est notitia; consummatio est fixa et stabilis persuasio quae contrariam dubitationem nullam admittat*]. Each, I have said, is the work of the Spirit.⁷⁴

It should be noted that assurance is an essential constituent in the nature of faith. Illumination is only a preparatory work, whose fulfilment is found in the work of sealing. For Calvin, even the cognitive “knowledge” is not a detached exercise which can be done by our own mental capacity. Illumination of the intellect, as the commencement of faith, already contains the element of persuasion. The human intellect is elevated by the Spirit to a new inclination towards the mystery of Christ:

When we call faith “knowledge” we do not mean comprehension of the sort that is commonly concerned with those things which fall under human sense perception. For faith is so far above sense that man’s mind has to go beyond and rise above itself [*ut mentem hominis se ipsam excedere et superare oporteat*] in order to attain it. Even where the mind has attained, it does not comprehend what it feels. But while it is persuaded of what it does not grasp, by the very certainty of its persuasion [*persuasionis certitudine*] it understands more than if it perceived anything human by its own capacity.⁷⁵

Therefore, as we cannot come to Christ unless we be drawn by the Spirit of God [*spiritu Dei tracti*], so when we are drawn we are lifted up in mind and heart above our understanding [*mente et animo evehimur supra nostram*

⁷³ See also R. A. Muller, “*Fides and Cognitio in Relation to the Problem of Intellect and Will in the Theology of John Calvin*” ch. in *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 159-173.

⁷⁴ Comm. on Eph. 1:13 (CO 51:153) CCNT 132.

⁷⁵ *Inst.* (1559) III, 2, 14 (CO 2:409).

ipsorum intelligentiam]. For the soul, illumined by him, takes on a new keenness [*novam aciem*], as it were, to contemplate the heavenly mysteries, whose splendour had previously blinded it. And man's understanding, thus beamed by the light of the Holy Spirit, then at last truly begins to taste those things which belong to the Kingdom of God, having formerly been quite foolish and dull in tasting them.⁷⁶

The commencement in the realm of intellect does not lack the element of assurance, but for Calvin the realm of heart is the very field on which the fatal battle is to be fought:

But if it is true that the mind's real understanding is his [the Spirit's] illumination, then in such confirmation of the heart his power is much more clearly manifested [*Quod si veram mentis intelligentiam eius illuminationem esse verum est, in tali cordis confirmatione multo evidentius eius virtus apparet*], to the extent that the heart's distrust is greater than the mind's blindness. It is harder for the heart to be furnished with assurance than for the mind to be endowed with thought. The Spirit accordingly serves as a seal, to seal up in our hearts those very promises the certainty of which it has previously impressed upon our minds [*Proinde spiritus sigilli vice fungitur, ad eas ipsas promissiones in cordibus nostris obsignandas, quarum certitudinem prius mentibus impressit*]; and takes the place of a guarantee to confirm and establish them.⁷⁷

This sealing of faith completes the communication of God's righteousness and all His blessings. As shown before, Christ's unique title of "beloved Son" is not for His private use, but to bring us *certum divini amoris erga nos pignus*. This *pignus* is further identified with the Spirit Himself on account of His sealing work in person. God is finally "personalised" in our heart as our merciful Father and Christ our Head, as we obtain this *pignus* of adoption, by which we know that we are no longer slaves but beloved children endowed with the promise of eternal inheritance. Our identity is authenticated and thus established with certainty, because Christ shares His unique mark

⁷⁶ *Inst.* (1559) III, 2, 34 (CO 2:426-7).

⁷⁷ *Inst.* (1559) III, 2, 36 (CO 2:428).

of authenticity, namely His own Spirit, with us. Therefore, the Spirit of sealing is also the Spirit of adoption:

This means, as he often teaches elsewhere, that the Spirit is the earnest and pledge of our adoption, so that we are surely convinced of God's Fatherly attitude towards us [*spiritum nobis arrham esse et pignus nostrae adoptionis, ut certo simus persuasi de paterno Dei erga nos affectu*]. ...The Spirit of his Son is more apt to the present context than any other epithet that he could have used. We are the sons of God because we are endowed with the same Spirit as His only Son [*Ideo enim nos filii, quia eodem spiritu cum filio unico praediti*]. And observe that Paul ascribes this to all Christians in common; for where the pledge of the divine love towards us is wanting, there is assuredly no faith [*sicuti revera nulla est fides, ubi non est pignus hoc divini erga nos amoris*].⁷⁸

As the Spirit is our surety because He testifies to our adoption, and our σφραγις and seal because He establishes the good faith of the promises, so He is well named our 'earnest' because it is His work to ratify God's covenant on both sides and without Him it would hang in suspense [*ita merito arrha dicitur, quia efficit ut ratum sit utrinque Dei pactum, quod alioqui quodammodo penderet*]. ... Secondly we should note that, since this degree of certainty is beyond the capacity of the human mind, it is the office of the Holy Spirit to confirm within us what God promises in His Word. That is why He is called Anointing, Earnest, Strengtheners, Seal [*unctio, arrha, paracletus et sigillum*].⁷⁹

As the appointed office of Christ as our sole Redeemer is controlled by the eternal decree of election, so is that of the Spirit as our Seal. In fact, Calvin could say that faith sealed by the Holy Spirit is the duplicate copy of the eternal decree of God:

How do we know that God has elected us before the creation of the world? By believing in Jesus Christ. I said that faith proceeds from election and is the fruit of it [*la foy procede de l'election, et c'en est le fruit*], which shows that the root is hidden within. Whosoever then believes is thereby assured that God has worked in him, and faith is, as it were, the duplicate copy that God

⁷⁸ Comm. on Gal. 4:6 (CO 50:228) CCNT 75.

⁷⁹ Comm. on 2 Cor. 1:21 (CO 50:24) CCNT 23. See also Comm. on Rom 8:17 (COR II 13:167) CCNT 171; Comm. on Rom 8:16 (COR II 13:166) CCNT 170.

gives us of the original of our adoption [*et la foy est comme le double que Dieu nous baille de l'original de nostre adoption*]. God has his eternal counsel, and he always reserves to himself the chief and original record of which he gives us a copy by faith. ... Nevertheless, God keeps to himself the knowledge of our election, as a prince would do the chief and original register. But yet he gives us sufficiently authentic copies or deeds of it, in that he imprints it in our hearts by his Holy Spirit that we are his children [*mais il nous en donne des copies ou instrumens assez authentiques, quand il engrave par son S. Esprit en nos coeurs, que nous sommes ses enfans*]. You see then that the faith which we have in our Lord Jesus Christ is enough to assure us of our election, and therefore, what more do we ask? I told you that Jesus Christ is the mirror in which God beholds us when he wishes to find us acceptable to himself [*Jesus Christ est le miroir auquel Dieu nous contemple quand il nous veut avoir agreables*]. Likewise, on our side, he is the mirror on which we must cast our eyes and look, when we desire to come to the knowledge of our election.⁸⁰

God looks through the mirror of Christ the beloved Son to grant the unconditional fatherly acceptance (i.e. justification) to those whom He had chosen as His adopted children according to His “original” decree before the creation of the world. Meanwhile, believers as members can look through the mirror of Christ the Head and be persuaded to obtain this free grace of justification, only because they are specially illuminated and sealed unto the “duplicate”, i.e. faith, by the Spirit, whom God bestows to none but the elect. Faith is thus an awakening of God’s fatherly favour towards us, as well as a filial response towards His love. This awakening and response is not a result of human striving, but wholly a radical reorientation of the Holy Spirit. This work of radical reorientation points us to another work of the Spirit, to which we are now turning.

⁸⁰ Sermon 3 on Eph. 1:4-6 (CO 51:281-2); English translation from *Sermons on Ephesians*, A. Golding (trans.) (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973) 47.

iii. Sanctification of the Holy Spirit

Regarding the benefit of sanctification, Calvin's language was notoriously loose. Terms such as repentance, regeneration, holiness, or newness of life were freely employed as synonyms of sanctification. Perhaps, the manifold meaning of sanctification can be well summed up in the following passage from the 1539 *Institutes*:

We confess that while through the intervention of Christ's righteousness God reconciles us to himself, and by free remission of sins accounts us righteous, his beneficence is at the same time joined with such a mercy that through his Holy Spirit he dwells in us and by his power the lusts of our flesh are each day more and more mortified; we are indeed sanctified, that is, consecrated to the Lord in true purity of life, with our hearts formed to obedience to the law. The end is that our especial will may be to serve his will and by every means to advance his glory alone.⁸¹

For Calvin, sanctification or its synonyms refers to a new spiritual condition of believers, in which their life is radically changed into a new nature, for a new purpose and towards a new destiny. This radical transformation consists of two major parts, namely mortification of the flesh and vivification of the spirit. Here both terms "flesh" and "spirit" refer to the human nature, especially the soul.⁸² The former stands for our original, corrupt human nature, while the latter "that part of the soul which the Spirit of God has purified from evil and so refashioned that the image of God shines forth within it".⁸³ Sanctification is therefore a process in which the old man in Adam is passing away

⁸¹ *Inst.* (1539) c. 6 (*CO* 1:761). See also *Inst.* (1559) III, 3, 1; 3; 5; 8; 9; Comm. on 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 6:2; 8:13; 8:14.

⁸² Comm. on Rom. 6:12 (*COR* II 13:125) *CCNT* 128-9; 7:18 (*COR* II 13:147) *CCNT* 151; *Inst.* (1559) III, 3, 8; 9 (*CO* 2:439-440).

⁸³ Comm. on Rom. 7:18 (*COR* II 13:147) *CCNT* 151.

while the new man in Christ is growing up. Calvin saw that the process images the death and resurrection of Christ:

Paul rightly passes from the fellowship of Christ's death to the sharing of His life. Because these two are inseparably connected, our old man is destroyed by the death of Christ, so that His resurrection may restore our righteousness, and make us new creatures. ... Let us notice, moreover, that the apostle does not simply exhort us here to imitate Christ, as though he had said that the death of Christ is an example which it is appropriate for all Christians to follow. Without doubt he has something higher in mind. ... His doctrine, as we may clearly see, is that the death of Christ is efficacious to destroy and overthrow the depravity of our flesh, and His resurrection to renew a better nature within us [*quod mors Christi efficax est, ad nequitiam carnis nostrae extinguendam ac profligandam; resurrectio vero, ad suscitandam melioris naturae novitatem*].⁸⁴

In other words, for believers, the death and resurrection of Christ are not past events, which can be recalled only by human memory and take effect only through human imitation. Instead, Christ's death and resurrection is a present reality which wipes out the old nature and brings forth the new. In order to emphasise the realistic character of this participation, Calvin could even say that the graft (i.e. believers) has the same condition of life or death as the tree (i.e. Christ) or that we pass from our own nature into Christ's:

our ingrafting [*insitio*] signifies not only our conformity to the example of Christ, but also the secret union [*arcanam coniunctionem*] by which we grow together with Him, in such a way that He revives us by His Spirit, and transfers His [the Spirit's] power to us [*ita ut nos spiritu suo vegetans, eius virtutem in nos transfundat*]. Therefore, as the graft has the same condition of life or death [*communem vitae et mortis conditionem*] as the tree into which it is ingrafted, so it is reasonable that we should be as much partakers of the life as of the death of Christ.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Comm. on Rom. 6:4 (*COR II 13:119*) CCNT 122-3.

⁸⁵ Comm. on Rom. 6:5 (*COR II 13:120*) CCNT 123-4, we change "same life or death" to "same condition of life and death".

In the grafting of trees the graft draws its nourishment from the root, but retains its own natural quality in the fruit which is eaten. In spiritual ingrafting, however, we not only derive the strength and sap of the life which flows from Christ, but we also pass from our own nature into His [*in hac autem non modo vigorem ac succum vitae a Christo trahimus, sed in eius naturam ex nostra demigramus*]. The apostle desired to point quite simply to the efficacy of the death of Christ, which manifested itself in putting to death our flesh, and also the efficacy of His resurrection in renewing within us the better nature of the spirit.⁸⁶

However, these realistic expressions are not meant to suggest a notion of mutual indwelling or co-inherence between Christ's humanity and ours, in which we are incorporated into the very same death and resurrection of Christ's humanity. For Calvin, the realism is significantly qualified by the word "likeness":

Besides referring to *resurrection*, it [the word *likeness*] seems to imply that we do not die a natural death like Christ, but that there is this similarity between our death and His – as Christ died in the flesh which He had assumed from us, so we die in ourselves, that we may live in Him. Our death, therefore, is not the same as Christ's but is similar to it [*Non ergo eadem est mors, sed similis*], for we are to notice the analogy between the death of this present life and our spiritual renewal.⁸⁷

We must keep in mind here the word *likeness*. Paul does not say that we shall live in heaven, as Christ does, but he makes the new life, which we live on earth after our regeneration, similar to His life in heaven [*sed vitam novam, quam a regeneratione in terra degimus, caelesti eius vitae facit conformem*]. His statement that we are *to die unto sin* after the example of Christ does not mean that our death may be said to be the same as His [*non ita convenit ut eadem mors possit dici*], for we die to sin when sin dies in us. In Christ's case it was different, for it was by dying that He destroyed sin.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Comm. on Rom. 6:5 (COR II 13:121) CCNT 124; we render the last instance of "spiritus" as "spirit", instead of "Spirit" in the original translation, for the parallel structure in the 1540 text obviously requires the term to be understood as the renewed human nature rather than the Holy Spirit.

⁸⁷ Comm. on Rom. 6:5 (COR II 13:120) CCNT 124.

⁸⁸ Comm. on Rom. 6:10 (COR II 13:123) CCNT 127; we change the translation of "conformem" from "match" to "similar to".

Christ, he [Paul] says, came in *the likeness of sinful flesh*. Although the flesh of Christ was unpolluted by any stain, it had the appearance of being sinful [*quia tametsi nullis maculis inquinata fuit Christi caro, peccatrix tamen in speciem visa est*], since it sustained the punishment due to our sins, and certainly death exerted every part of its power on the flesh of Christ as though it were subject to it.⁸⁹

Christ's humanity is unpolluted while ours is depraved. Therefore, Christ's death is not the consequence of sin but its destruction. In the context of sanctification, the contact point between Christ's death and ours is this sin-destroying efficacy. The realism with which Calvin could boldly assert "we also pass from our own nature into His" does not take place at the level of essence, whether divinity or humanity, but at the level of spiritual quality. In other words, the efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection is so powerful that we cannot retain our own natural (sinful) quality, but have to be reformed to a new spiritual quality which is originated in Christ.⁹⁰ Again, this sanctifying work of Christ is closely coupled with a corresponding office of the Spirit:

the word 'sanctification' denotes separation. This takes place in us when, by the Spirit, we are born again into newness of life, to serve, not the world, but God [*Porro sanctificationis verbum segregationem significat. Ea fit in nobis quum per spiritum in vitae novitatem regeneramur, ut serviamus Deo, et non mundo*]. For since we are by nature unholy, the Spirit sets us apart to God. Because this really takes place when we are ingrafted into the body of Christ, outside of which there is only defilement, and since the Spirit is given to us from Christ only, and not from any other source, Paul rightly says that we are sanctified in Christ, when, through Him, we cleave to God, and in Him are made 'new creations'.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Comm. on Rom. 8:3 (*COR II 13:155*) *CCNT* 159.

⁹⁰ Calvin could sometimes assert that this spiritual nature or quality is divine in some sense, see Comm. on Rom. 6:11 (*COR II 13:124*) *CCNT* 128: "licet tantum inchoetur carnis mortificatio in nobis, hoc tamen ipso peccati vitam extingui, ut deinde spiritualis novitas, quae Divina est, perpetuo duret."

⁹¹ Comm. on 1 Cor. 1:2 (*CO 49:308*) *CCNT* 18.

But since all emotions of the flesh are hostility against God, the first step toward obeying his law is to deny our own nature. Afterward, they designate the renewal by the fruits that follow from it – namely, righteousness, judgement, and mercy. It would not be enough duly to discharge such duties unless the mind itself and the heart first put on the inclination to righteousness, judgement, and mercy [*nisi mens primum ipsa et cor iustitiae, iudicii, misericordiae affectum induerint*]. That comes to pass when the Spirit of God so imbues our souls, steeped in his holiness, with both new thoughts and feelings, that they can be rightly considered new [*Id fit quum Dei spiritus intinctas sua sanctitate animas nostras novis et cogitationibus et affectibus ita imbuit, ut novae iure haberi queant*]. ... For from “mortification” we infer that we are not conformed to the fear of God and do not learn the rudiments of piety, unless we are violently slain by the sword of the Spirit and brought to nought [*nisi ubi gladio spiritus violenter mactati in nihilum redigimur*].⁹²

Here we can see that the christological statements such as that “we are sanctified in Christ” and that “our old man is destroyed by the death of Christ” can well be expressed pneumatologically as that “we are set apart by the Spirit” and that “we are violently slain by the sword of the Spirit and brought to nought”. The realism of participating in Christ’s death and resurrection is indeed pointing to a communication process of spiritual quality, in which the Holy Spirit assumes the task of translating Christ’s spiritual quality to the soul of believers:

As also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. [The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.] ... You see from this that we have living souls since we are men, but that the life-giving Spirit of Christ is poured out upon us through the grace of regeneration. ... The first man is of the earth, earthly: [the second man is of heaven.] ... But they [the Manichaeans] went wrong in thinking that Paul is speaking here about the substance of the body, when he was dealing rather with its characteristic or quality [sed Paulum hic loqui de corporis substantia falso putarunt, quum potius de habitu vel qualitate disserat]. ... Christ, on the other hand, has brought us the life-giving Spirit from heaven, in order that He might regenerate us into a life that is better and higher than earth [Christus autem e coelo spiritum vivificum nos attulit, quo nos regeneret in vitam meliorem et terra sublimiorem]. In short, our life in this world we owe to Adam, as branches to root; Christ, on the other hand, is

⁹² *Inst.* (1559) III, 3, 8 (CO 2:439-440).

the originator and source of the life of heaven [*Christus autem principium nobis et autor est coelestis vitae*].⁹³

*Where the Spirit of the Lord is. ... The word 'spirit' has a different meaning here than in the last verse [i.e. The Lord is the spirit]. There it meant the soul and was applied metaphorically to Christ, but here it means the Holy Spirit whom Christ Himself gives to us [illic capiebatur pro anima et Christo metaphorice tribuebatur; hic vero spiritum sanctum significat, quem ipse Christus suis donat]. Christ in regenerating us gives life to the Law and shows Himself to be the source of life, just as the soul is the source from which all man's vital functions spring. Christ is therefore, so to speak, the universal soul of all men not as regards His essence, but as regards His grace. Or, to put it another way, Christ is the spirit because He animates us with the life-giving power of His Spirit [Est igitur Christus universalis (ut ita dicam) omnium anima, non quod ad essentiam, sed quod ad gratiam. Vel si mavis, Christus spiritus est, quia vivifica spiritus sui virtute nos animat].*⁹⁴

As regards the Pauline terms of “the second man” or “the last Adam”, Calvin clearly associated them with Christ’s humanity. For him, the facts that Christ in His humanity is “of heaven” and that He functions as “the originator and source of the life of heaven”, do not depend on the *substantia* of His humanity, but on its spiritual *qualitas*. This life-giving *qualitas* was first imparted to His humanity in the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. Christ in His “energised” humanity then animates us with the life-giving power of the same Spirit. In other words, the translating work of the Spirit in believers is actually a repetition of what He has effected in the reconciling office of Christ. His new creative works in us cannot be new to such an extent that they go beyond the revealed office of Christ the Mediator:

⁹³ Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:45-47 (CO 49:558-9) CCNT 339-340.

⁹⁴ Comm. on 2 Cor. 3:17 (CO 50:46) CCNT 49. See also Comm. on 2 Cor. 5:16 (CO 50:68-9) CCNT 75 “Thus unless we still recognise Christ’s humanity, all the assurance and comfort that we should have in Him perishes. But we do in fact know Christ in His flesh as true man and our brother, but we do not know Him carnally, for our trust is based only on a consideration of His spiritual gifts. He is spiritual to us, not because He has laid aside the body and been changed into a spirit, but because it is by the power of His Spirit that He regenerates and governs His own.”

Paul calls this Spirit of regeneration life, not only because He lives and nourishes in us, but also because He quickens us by His power, until He destroys our mortal flesh and at last renews us perfectly. ... Paul takes his confirmation of the last verse from the efficient cause, in the following manner: 'If Christ was raised by the power of the Spirit of God, and if the Spirit retains eternal power, He will also exert that power in us.' [*si potentia Spiritus Dei, Christus excitatus est, ac Spiritus aeternam retinet potentiam, eandem in nobis quoque exeret*]... We conclude from this that he [Paul] is not speaking of the last resurrection, which will take place in a moment, but of the continual operation of the Spirit, by which He gradually mortifies the remains of the flesh and renews in us the heavenly life.⁹⁵

Once we get involved in this life-long process of transformation, we are no longer living to ourselves, for Christ animates and guides our life towards God with the mortifying and quickening virtue of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁶ Two points are to be noted here. First, there is an inner connection between the Spirit's sanctifying office and Christ's kingly as well as priestly offices. On the one hand, the ruling of the Spirit is the very manner of Christ's ruling in us, just as the indwelling of the former is the manner of the latter's indwelling. On the other hand, our works are pleasing to God only because they are actually God's own work through the Spirit and the impurity cleaving to them is pardoned through the blood of Christ.⁹⁷ Secondly, the mortifying and quickening work of the Spirit is closely correlated with His illuminating and sealing work. Our mind is illumined to new thoughts and our heart is instilled with new inclination and feelings so

⁹⁵ Comm. on Rom. 8:10-11 (COR II 13:161-2) CCNT 165-6.

⁹⁶ Comm. on Gal. 2:19-20 (CO 50:198-9) CCNT 42.

⁹⁷ Inst. (1559) III, 17, 5 (CO 2:607-8); III, 17, 10 (CO 2:612-3); Comm. on Rom. 4:6 (COR II 13:83-4) CCNT 86-7; Comm. on John 17:19 (CO 47:385) CCNT 146. Krusche rightly points out that for Calvin, the unity of justification and sanctification is not grounded on the unity of immanent Trinity, but on the unity of the kingly and priestly offices of Christ (Krusche 277). However, he too neatly attributes the benefit of justification to the priestly office, while that of sanctification to the kingly office. It seems that Calvin himself can use both priestly and kingly categories to describe Christ's sanctifying work, from which the corresponding work of the Spirit cannot be separated.

as to destroy the old nature and bring forth the new. In this way, sanctification leads to obedience to God's law and fear of God. However, believers obey God not in the manner of a mercenary, nor do they fear Him out of anxiety of punishment. Their fear of God is not servile fear which threatens the wicked to flee from God with a restless heart, but childlike fear which compels them to earnestly seek and humbly receive the Father's mercy. In this sense, the sanctifying work of the Spirit is a reinforcement of His function as seal of adoption:

Paul teaches us that only those are finally reckoned to be the sons of God who are ruled by His Spirit, since by this mark God acknowledges His own [*Docet enim eos demum censerī in Dei filiis, qui reguntur eius Spiritu, quoniam hac nota suos Deus agnoscit*]. ... But [by action of the Spirit] Paul here means *sanctification*, with which the Lord favours none but His elect, while He sets them apart for Himself as His sons [*sed hic sanctificationem intelligit, qua non nisi electos suos Dominus dignatur, dum eos sibi in filios segregat*].⁹⁸

But John is here looking at the effects that the Spirit, dwelling in us, produces. As also Paul when he says that they are the sons of God who are led by God's Spirit. For he also is dealing with the mortification of the flesh and newness of life. The sum of it is that it appears from this that we are God's children, when His Spirit rules and governs our life [*Haec summa est, inde constare an filii Dei simus, si vitam nostram spiritus eius moderatur et gubernat*].⁹⁹

As due attention was paid to ward off any possibility of regarding good works (i.e. effects of the Spirit's sanctifying work) as the cause of salvation, Calvin was quite ready to ascribe the highest value to them as the signs of the divine benevolence. God can indeed use good works as an inferior aid to bring comfort and assurance in believers' hearts regarding their election.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, notwithstanding the fact that from God's

⁹⁸ Comm. on Rom. 8:14 (*COR II 13:163*) CCNT 167. See also Comm. on 1 Pet. 1:1.

⁹⁹ Comm. on 1 John 3:24 (*CO 55:345*) CCNT 282.

¹⁰⁰ *Inst.* (1559) III, 14, 18 (*CO 2:576-7*); III, 18, 4 (*CO 2:606-7*); Comm. on 1 John 3:19 (*CO 55:341-2*); 2 Pet. 1:10 (*CO 55:449-51*).

frame of reference His merciful will of election was prior to both faith and good works, from our frame of reference holiness of life is arranged to be prior to the final possession of eternal life. Good works can therefore, in such peculiar sense, be regarded as the inferior “cause” of our eternal life, for they prepare (though not able to admit) us for the Kingdom of Heaven.¹⁰¹ For Calvin, the Spirit of adoption is also the Spirit of sanctification. This is the pneumatological equivalent of Calvin’s favourite argument for the unity of justification and sanctification: Christ cannot be divided into pieces.

¹⁰¹ *Inst.* (1559) III, 14, 21 (*CO* 2:578-9); III, 18, 4 (*CO* 2:606-7); Comm. on Rom. 8:17 (*COR* II 13:167) CCNT 171.

Chapter 7

The Holy Spirit and the Promise of Eternal Inheritance

In this chapter we will proceed to examine the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding believers to enter into the eternal inheritance promised by the Gospel. In Calvin's thought, this is actually the external counterpart of internal regeneration, which we have discussed in the previous chapter. We will see how the notion of *communio Christi vinculo Spiritus* functions in the dimension of time. Two stages of Christ's kingly office are established, namely the hidden stage in the present and the manifest stage in the eschaton. The Holy Spirit is the very agent who connects the present with the future by unveiling the hidden glory under the present misery, as well as transforming the present life according to the future glory. In fact, His future work is none other than the outward manifestation of what He currently does inwardly in our human soul. This will be discussed in the following two sections. Also, the transition of Christ's kingly office from its hidden to manifest condition leads us to consider the eschatological concentration of God's glory and sovereignty. In the last section, we will then examine what will happen to the so-called *extra Calvinisticum* in the eschaton.

I. Spirit of glory in the midst of shame

According to Calvin, Christian life is characterised by a progress of our conformity to Christ. This conformity is twofold, namely internal and external. The internal conformity, or the internal mortification as Calvin sometimes called it, refers to the radical transformation of our inner nature from the old sinful inclination to a new spiritual one. Christ's death and resurrection function as the source of sin-destroying and life-giving efficacy, which is imparted to us in the work of the Holy Spirit. We have already discussed this aspect in the previous chapter. The external conformity, or the mortification of the outward man, concerns how we obediently follow Christ in bearing the cross, i.e. suffering humility and afflictions. Christ's death and resurrection form the paradigm and destiny of the whole course of our life.¹ In examining this aspect of conformity, we will understand how the Spirit efficaciously leads believers to possess the eternal inheritance promised in the Gospel.

Obviously these two aspects of conformity are closely related, although Calvin seldom worked out the full detail of their mutual relation. In his writings, the inward

¹ Comm. on 2 Cor. 4:10 (*CO* 50:55) *CCNT* 59: "The word 'dying' or 'mortification' has a different meaning here than in many other passages of Scripture. For it often means self-denial, by which we renounce the lusts of the flesh and are renewed into obedience to God. Here it means those afflictions that make us meditate on the end of this present life. For the sake of clarity we may call the former meaning internal mortification and the latter external. By both we are conformed to Christ, directly by the one and indirectly by the other [*Docendi gratia, prior illa vocetur interior mortificatio; haec vero externa. Utraque nos Christo conformes reddit; illa directe, haec indirecte, ut ita loquar.*]; Comm. on 1 Pet. 4:1 (*CO* 55:270) *CCNT* 298: "Duplicem hanc mortis Christi similitudinem scriptura nobis commendat: nempe ut illi configuremur in probris et aerumnis; deinde ut nobis mortui, et extincto veteri homine, renovemur in spiritualem vitam."; Comm. on Phil. 3:10 (*CO* 52:50) *CCNT* 276: "Caeterum duplex est societas et communicatio mortis Christi. Altera est interior, quam scriptura vocare solet mortificationem carnis, aut crucifixionem veteris hominis; de qua tractat Paulus ad Romanos capite sexto. Altera est exterior, quae vocatur mortificatio externi hominis; ea est crucis tolerantia, de qua tractat octavo eiusdem epistolae capite; atque hic etiam, nisi fallor."; see also Comm. on 2 Cor. 4:16 (*CO* 50:58) *CCNT* 163.

process seems to be the forerunner of the outward counterpart. In the case of the inward conformity, both the mortification of the old man and the accompanying vivification of the new are already in operation even within the present life. However, for the outward one, the whole course of our present life is under the sign of the cross. As to the present condition of our “outward man”, Calvin customarily left us a picture as gloomy as possible:

We must all, therefore, be ready for our whole life to represent nothing but an image of death, until it produces death itself, even as the life of Christ is nothing but a prelude to death.²

Eternal life is promised to us, but it is promised to the dead; we are told of the resurrection of the blessed, but meantime we are involved in corruption; we are declared to be just, and sin dwells within us; we hear that we are blessed, but meantime we are overwhelmed by untold miseries; we are promised an abundance of all good things, but we are often hungry and thirsty; God proclaims that He will come to us immediately, but seems to be deaf to our cries.³

Christian life is therefore a great paradox. We are promised glory and life, but what we experience day by day is nothing but afflictions and death. Calvin discerned that behind this apparent discrepancy stands God’s unfathomable way of salvation, in which He ordains suffering and death as the gateway to glory and life:

He [Peter] teaches us that the government of the Church of Christ has been so divinely constituted from the beginning that the Cross has been the way to victory, death the way to life, and that this had been clearly testified. ... The order is to be noticed. He mentions sufferings first, and then adds the glories which are to follow. He means that this order cannot be changed or subverted, but rather afflictions must precede glory [*Hic ordo notandus est, quod passiones statuit priore loco; deinde addit sequuturas glorias. Significat enim*

² Comm. on Phil. 3:10 (CO 52:50) CCNT 276.

³ Comm. on Heb. 11:1 (CO 55:143-4) CCNT 157-8.

non posse hanc rationem mutari vel praeverti, quin gloriam praecedant afflictiones]. ... Christians must suffer many troubles before they enjoy glory, and that afflictions are not evils, because they have glory attached to them. Since God has ordained this connexion, it is not for us to separate one from the other. ... Peter, indeed, says that the Spirit had testified of the coming afflictions of Christ, but he does not separate Christ from His body. This, then, is not to be confined to the person of Christ, but a beginning is to be made with the Head, so that the members may follow in due order [*Itaque non debet hoc restringi ad Christi personam; sed initium faciendum est a capite, ut membra sua ordine sequantur*], as Paul also teaches us, that we must be conformed to Him who is the Firstborn among His brethren (Rom 8:29). ... It is much more relevant in confirming our faith, when he sets forth our afflictions as viewed in Christ, for we thereby see better the connexion of death and life between us and Him.⁴

In other words, external conformity to Christ the Head means that His members should follow His footstep in this strange way of salvation. As Christ has passed through great tribulation and now enters into His risen glory, so we are now also plunged into great misery and have to wait for the unseen glory. The great contrast between our shameful and perishing condition and Christ's risen glory paradoxically sets the stage for an eschatology of hope.⁵ In fact, Calvin was quite restrained in speculating too much about the concrete details of the eschaton. His teaching carries a strong pastoral and existential concern, being orientated to strengthen the faith of believers in the midst of imminent and overwhelming threats:

Paul mentions here the resurrection of Christ, on which the hope of our own resurrection is based, for death attacks us on every side [*Christi resurrectionem hic commemorat, in qua nostrae resurrectionis spes fundata est; nam undique mors nos obsidet*]. Unless, therefore, we learn to look to Christ, our hearts will fail us at every moment. For the same reason he warns us that Christ is to be awaited from heaven, for we shall find nothing in the

⁴ Comm. on 1 Pet. 1:11(CO 55:217-8) CCNT 240; see also *Inst.* (1559) III, 8, 1 (CO 2:515).

⁵ T.F. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996) 90-164; H. Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955) 15-54: "If we call Luther the theologian of faith we may, even if with exaggeration, characterize Calvin as the theologian of hope." at 15.

world to bear us up, while there are innumerable trials to make us despair [*quia nihil in mundo reperiemus quod nos sustineat; sunt autem infinitae tentationes quae nos exaniment*].⁶

For Calvin, believers are fighting a bitter battle. Their distresses come from both without and within. Outside the faith community, there are wicked persons around them, who despise and even deepen their miserable condition. However, to make life even harder, believers themselves, judging in accordance with their common sense, are not able to convince themselves that they are really elected rather than forsaken by God. In this world, they can get hold of nothing but a hope of hidden life:

It is worthy noticing that our life is said to be hid [*quod vitam nostram dicit esse absconditam*], so that we may not murmur or complain if our life, buried under the ignominy of the cross and various distresses, differs nothing from death, but may patiently wait for the day of revelation. ... Hence there is no reason why we should be alarmed if, wherever we look, we nowhere see life. For we are saved by hope [*Quare non est quod terreamur, si undique circumspicientes vitam nusquam cernamus. Spe enim salvi sumus*]. But those things which are already before our eyes are not hoped for. Nor does he [Paul] teach that our life is hid merely in the opinion of the world, but even as to our own senses [*Neque vero tantum mundi opinione vitam absconditam esse docet, sed etiam quoad sensum nostrum*]; because this is the true and necessary trial of our hope, that being encompassed, as it were, with death, we may seek life elsewhere than in the world.⁷

“Hiddenness” characterises the condition of both Christ the Head and believers His members. This condition of hiddenness is closely linked up with a series of elevating movements. First, through the Ascension, the Head was physically elevated and retained

⁶ Comm. on 1 Thes. 1:10 (CO 52:145) CCNT 340. Also Comm. on 1 Pet. 1:7 (CO 55:213) CCNT 235-6: “It is hence necessary that we should turn our eyes to Christ if we wish to see glory and praise in our afflictions. Our trials are full of reproach and shame for us but they become glorious in Christ. That glory in Christ is not yet plainly seen, for the day of consolation has not yet come.” and *Inst.* (1559) III, 25, 1 (CO 2: 728-9).

⁷ Comm. on Col. 3:3 (CO 52:118-9) CCNT 346-7.

up in the heaven as the hidden source of glory. Consequently, the hidden Christ has drawn His members into a spiritual elevation, in which their heart and mind are liberated from the earthly bondage and distress to reach upward to the hidden source of their own glory:

Ascension goes along with resurrection. Therefore, if we are members of Christ, we must ascend into heaven, because when He had been raised from the dead, He was received up into heaven, that He might draw us up with Him. Now, we seek those things which are above when in our minds we are truly sojourners in this world, and are not bound to it.⁸

But since Ascension is pointing ahead to the Second Advent, this upward movement towards the hidden source of glory at the same time triggers a forward movement towards the cessation of hiddenness, in which the same glory will actually happen to us in fullness:

Since Christ rose for the purpose of making us all at length partakers of the same glory with Himself, because we are His members, Paul intimates that His resurrection would be of no effect, unless He appears a second time as their Redeemer, and extends to the whole body of the Church the fruit and effect of that power which He displayed in Himself [*significat Paulus, irritam fore resurrectionem, nisi iterum appareat suorum redemptor, fructumque et effectum eius, quam in se exhibuit, virtutis ad totum ecclesiae corpus extendat*].⁹

‘Christ,’ he [Paul] says, ‘will not possess this glory for Himself alone, but it will be shared among all the saints.’ It is the chief and unique consolation of the godly that when the Son of God will be manifested in the glory of His kingdom, He will gather them together into the same fellowship with Himself [*Haec summa est et singularis piorum consolatio, quod quum in gloria regni sui manifestabitur Dei filius, in eandem secum societatem eos colliget*]. There is, however, an implied contrast between the present condition in which believers suffer and complain and that final restoration. ... The aim is that the godly should pass over this brief course of their earthly life with eyes closed

⁸ Comm. on Col. 3:1 (CO 52:117) CCNT 345.

⁹ Comm. on 1 Thes. 1:10 (CO 52:145) CCNT 340.

and their minds ever intent on the future manifestation of Christ's kingdom. For to what purpose does he mention His coming in power if not that they may leap forward in hope to that blessed resurrection which is still hidden from sight?¹⁰

It is to be noted that Calvin's doctrine of hope is fully in line with his eucharistic understanding. The key conceptions in his eucharistic writings such as the local absence (and thus hiddenness) of Christ's glorious body and the exhortation of *sursum corda* also play a prominent role in the doctrine of hope. If it is the particular office of the sacrament to confirm, sustain and strengthen our faith, the same can be said of hope:

Accordingly, in brief, hope is nothing else than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been truly promised by God. Thus, faith believes God to be true, hope awaits the time when his truth shall be manifested; faith believes that he is our Father, hope anticipates that he will ever show himself to be a Father toward us; faith believes that eternal life has been given to us, hope anticipates that it will some time be revealed; faith is the foundation upon which hope rests, hope nourishes and sustains faith [*Fides fundamentum est cui spes incumbit; spes fidem alit ac sustinet*]. ... In short, by unremitting renewing and restoring, it invigorates faith again and again with perseverance.¹¹

¹⁰ Comm. on 2 Thes. 1:10 (CO 52:192) CCNT 392-3. Also, Comm. on 2 Cor. 5:7 (CO 50:63) CCNT 69: "Now faith is rightly opposed to sight because it perceives things that are hidden from men's senses and reaches forward to things still future that do not as yet appear. Believers are more like dead men than living, for they often seem to be forsaken by God and they always have the elements of death shut up within them. Thus they have to hope against hope."; and Comm. on Phil. 3:20-21 (CO 52:56) CCNT 282-3: "From the union that we have with Christ, he [Paul] proves that our citizenship is in heaven, for it is not right that the members should be separated from their Head. Accordingly, as Christ is in heaven, it is necessary that we should in mind dwell outside this world if we are to cleave to Him. Besides, where our treasure is, there is our heart also (Matt. 6:21). Christ, our blessedness and glory, is in heaven: let our souls, therefore, dwell with Him on high. ... By this argument he stirs up the Philippians yet more to lift up their minds to heaven, and cleave wholly to Christ; because this body which we bear is not an everlasting abode but a frail tabernacle, which will soon be reduced to nothing. Besides, it is liable to so many miseries and so many shaming infirmities, that it may justly be called vile and full of ignominy. Whence, then, is its restoration to be hoped for? From heaven, at Christ's coming. Hence there is no part of us that ought not to aspire after heaven with wholehearted desire."

¹¹ *Inst.* (1559) III, 2, 42 (CO 2:432-3).

As in the eucharist we are summoned to lift up our mind above the earthly elements to reach the glorious Christ in heaven, so in our everyday afflictions we are summoned to lift up our eye above the present shame to meditate the future glory at Christ's Second Coming. In the former case, Calvin emphasised that our mind by itself does not possess a power great enough to elevate itself to attain this spiritual insight. It is the Holy Spirit who functions as the bond between the risen Christ and us, so that in His working the limitation of our mind is being transcended. In the case of the eschatological hope, the Spirit as bond in the Eucharist turns to be the Spirit of glory, who transcends the limitation of our common sense, so that we can glimpse the glory covered under the cloak of shame:

This [reproach declared as blessed] is quite against what men commonly think and feel, but he [Peter] gives as the reason, *Because the Spirit of God*, which is also the *Spirit of glory*, rests on them [*Quod a communi hominum sensu abhorret. Sed causam reddit: quia spiritus Dei, qui idem est gloriae spiritus, super eos quiescit*]. ... Peter shows that it is no hindrance to the happiness of the godly that they suffer reproach for the name of Christ, because they nevertheless retain glory unspoiled in the sight of God, while the Spirit, who has glory ever connected with Him, dwells in them [*dum in illis habitat spiritus, qui gloriam secum perpetuo coniunctam habet*]. What seems a paradox to the flesh the Spirit of God establishes in their minds with a sense of certainty [*Ita quod carni videtur paradoxum, spiritus Dei certo sensu in eorum animis comprobatur*].¹²

In the work of the Holy Spirit, the glory hidden in sufferings is revealed secretly to believers. The hope for glory encourages them to walk through this strange way of salvation. But why, in the first place, did God choose this way of salvation? Calvin answered that the sins and feebleness remaining in believers urgently need these sufferings as an antidote. Before we attain the perfection of holiness in the eschaton, we

¹² Comm. on 1 Pet. 4:14 (CO 55:279) CCNT 308.

are always prone to various attacks and temptations from Satan. The first deadly enemy is our self-confidence or pride:

First, as we are by nature too inclined to attribute everything to our flesh – unless our feebleness be shown, as it were, to our eyes – we readily esteem our virtue above its due measure. ... Hence we are lifted up into stupid and empty confidence in the flesh; and relying on it, we are then insolently proud against God himself, as if our own powers were sufficient without His grace.¹³

Prosperity and worldly comfort can reduce our sensitivity to this spiritual pride and lead to the second deadly enemy, namely sluggishness:

Almost all of us labour under two very different evils, too much impatience and too much laziness. In our impatience we snatch at the day of Christ as something expected imminently, but in our carelessness we push it far off.¹⁴

Indeed, there is no middle ground between these two: either the world must become worthless to us or hold us bound by intemperate love of it. ... Now, since the present life has very many allurements with which to entice us, and much show of pleasantness, grace, and sweetness wherewith to wheedle us, it is very much in our interest to be called away now and again so as not to be captivated by such panderings.¹⁵

Therefore, in order to protect us from these fatal diseases, God vaccinates us by introducing various kinds of afflictions into our life. Negatively, they unmask the fleeting and miserable nature of this earthly life.¹⁶ Positively, God turns them to be a training programme to prepare His people for the future inheritance:

¹³ *Inst.* (1559) III, 8, 2 (*CO* 2:515-6).

¹⁴ Comm. on 2 Pet. 3:10 (*CO* 55:476) *CCNT* 365.

¹⁵ *Inst.* (1559) III, 9, 2 (*CO* 2:524).

¹⁶ *Inst.* (1559) III, 9, 1 (*CO* 2:523-4).

If it is the highest blessing to win a crown in the Kingdom of God, it follows that the tests the Lord puts us through are in the interests of our happiness. The argument is from the end, or the effect. We see that the faithful are vexed with this misfortune in order that their religion and obedience may be manifest, and that in the end they may be ready to receive the crown of life [*unde colligimus, ideo tot malis vexari fideles, ut manifesta fiat eorum pietas et obedientia: sicque demum ad recepiendam vitae coronam praeparari*].¹⁷

The first reason is that, while the Lord may frequently also punish unbelievers with His lashes, and begin to carry out His judgements against them, yet He particularly afflicts His own people, and that in different ways. He does so, in the first place, because those whom He loves, He disciplines, and, secondly, in order to train them in endurance, to test their obedience, and to prepare them, step by step, by the way of the Cross for a real renewal [*Primo, quia quos diligit, castigat: deinde, ut eos erudiat ad patientiam, ut obedientiam probet, ut paulatim cruce ipsos ad veram renovationem praeparet*].¹⁸

Against the problem of self-glory, extreme afflictions humble our heart to such an extent that we wholeheartedly honour our real source of power and glory:

For God does not strip us and leave us naked, but clothes us with glory at once, but with this one condition, that whenever we wish to boast we must turn away from ourselves. To sum up, man, reduced to nothing in his own eyes, knowing that goodness exists in God alone and nowhere else, and having given up eagerness for his own glory, is not only moved, but also aspires with his whole being to promote the glory of God alone [*In summa, homo redactus apud se in nihilum, et agnoscens nihil boni alibi quam in solo Deo esse, omisso propriae gloriae studio, ad unam Dei gloriam promovendam totus adspiret ac feratur*].¹⁹

¹⁷ Comm. on Jam. 1:12 (CO 55:389) CCNT 267; also *Inst.* (1559) III, 18, 1 (CO 2:604) “That is to say, he receives them into possession of it through the race of good works in order to fulfill his own work in them according to the order that he has laid down, it is no wonder if they are said to be crowned according to their own works, by which they are doubtless prepared to receive the crown of immortality [nihil mirum si secundum opera sua dicuntur coronari: quibus haud dubie ad recipiendam immortalitatis coronam praeparantur].”

¹⁸ Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:19 (CO 49:544) CCNT 321; see also *Inst.* (1559) III, 8, 4-6.

¹⁹ Comm. on 1 Cor. 1:31 (CO 49:332) CCNT 47. Also, Comm. on 2 Thes. 1:12 (CO 52:193-4) CCNT 394: “That the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified. He [Paul] recalls us to the main purpose of our whole life, that we devote ourselves to the glory of the Lord. Particularly worthy of notice is the remark which he adds that those who have extolled the glory of Christ are to be glorified in their turn in Him. The amazing goodness of God is especially seen in the fact that He desires His glory to be conspicuously

Against the problem of sluggishness, the earnest hope in the midst of shame motivates us to practise with our whole being a godly living in accordance with the future glory:

He [Paul] finds a basis for his exhortation in the hope of future immortality, and certainly if that hope is deeply settled in our minds, it cannot but lead us to devote ourselves wholly to God [*A spe futurae immortalitatis exhortationem deducit. Et certe fieri non potest quin illa, si penitus animis nostris insideat, nos totos addicat Deo*]. ... From this we learn, first, that our greatest incentive to increased activity and willingness in doing good should be the hope of a future resurrection [*nihil esse quod nos ad studium bene agendi alacriores reddat, quam spem futurae resurrectionis*]; second, that believers should always have their eyes fixed upon it, lest they grow weary in following the right course, for, unless we entirely depend upon it, we shall continually be carried away into the world's vanities.²⁰

It is to be noted that meditation of future life, for Calvin, is not a quietistic contemplation of things above and beyond, but is oriented to set us free for God's service right here and now. God radically cuts the ground from under self-glory, and inspires us in the work of the Spirit to see our true glory in Christ, which is now buried under various afflictions. This inspiration will leave no part of us remaining idle, but drive them into a vigorous striving for promoting the same glory. In this way, good works or disciplines under tribulations can be regarded as signs of eschatological glorification, just as they are

displayed in us who are entirely covered with dishonour. It is, however, a double miracle, that He afterwards shines upon us with His glory, as though He would do the same for us in return."

²⁰ Comm. on Tit. 2:13 (CO 52:423-4) CCNT 374-5. Also, Comm. on 2 Pet. 3:14 (CO 55:477) CCNT 366: "He [Peter] argues rightly from hope to its effect, which is the practice of godly living. Hope is living and efficacious, and therefore it must draw us to itself. Anyone who hopes for new heavens will begin renewal within himself, and will aspire to this with all his energy, while those who stick to their own filthy ways will certainly have no thoughts of the kingdom of God, and have no discernment of anything but this corruptible world."

also the signs of predestined adoption. Interestingly enough, Calvin could sometimes invoke them as a proof of future resurrection of the body:

For how would it help to devote feet, hands, eyes, and tongue to God's service if they were not to share in its fruit and reward? ... And if it is true that "through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22), no reason supports the refusal of that entrance to the bodies, which God trains under the standard of the cross and adorns with the praise of victory.²¹

However, Calvin was very cautious to qualify that our striving for glory is not actually our work, but, through and through, the work of the same Spirit of glory:

There is nothing here that is ours, either in the action itself [i.e. our devotion to the glory of the Lord] or in its effect or fruit [i.e. our glorification in Him]. It is by the guidance of the Holy Spirit alone that our life is ordered to the glory of God [*Solo enim spiritus sancti ductu vita nostra componitur in Dei gloriam*].²²

While making room for humble and diligent obedience over against fleshly complacency and sluggishness, Calvin did not want to yield a corner to the Romanist notion of cooperating grace or cooperation of human free will. If the human mind by itself does not have the power to discern the glory, nor does the human will have the power to pursue it. It is the Holy Spirit alone who sustains the perseverance of believers. Believers cannot in any sense claim the slightest credit with their willing obedience, for even the free will itself is entirely the gift of the Spirit:

We see, therefore, that when they [the Papists] treat of the grace of the Holy Spirit, they leave man suspended in the midst. How far then does the Spirit of God work within us [*Quousque ergo operatur in nobis spiritus Dei*]? They

²¹ *Inst.* (1559) III, 25, 8 (CO 2:738-9).

²² Comm. on 2 Thes. 1:12 (CO 52:194) CCNT 394-5.

say, that we may be able to will rightly and to act rightly. Hence nothing else is given us by the Holy Spirit but the ability, but it is ours to cooperate, and to strengthen and to establish what otherwise would be of no avail [*Ergo nihil aliud nobis datur a spiritu sancto nisi posse: nostrum autem est cooperari, et ratum habere ac sancire quod alioqui esset nullius momenti*]. ... But here is their ridiculous ignorance, for how could any one stand even for a single moment, if God conferred on us only the ability. Adam had that ability in his first creation, and then he was as yet perfect, but we are depraved; so that as far as the remains of the flesh abide in us which we carry about in this life, we must strive with great difficulties. If therefore Adam by and by fell, although endued with rectitude of nature and with the faculty of willing and of acting uprightly, what will become of us? For we have need not only of Adam's uprightness, and of his faculty of both willing and acting uprightly, but we need unconquered fortitude [*neque enim opus est tantum rectitudine illa Adae, vel facultate illa recte volendi aut agendi: sed opus est invicta fortitudine*], that we may not yield to temptations, but be superior to the devil, and subdue all depraved and vicious affections of the flesh, and persevere unto the end in this wrestling or warfare. We see, therefore, how childishly they trifle who ascribe nothing else to the grace of the Holy Spirit unless the gift of ability.²³

Calvin could not accept the teaching that the Holy Spirit is said to give us the ability to will rightly and to act rightly, so that we can cooperate, follow and confirm this first grace by our own choice. For him, this teaching may lead to two interrelated corollaries: (1) the efficacy of God's first grace ultimately depends on human effort; (2) the subsequent or co-operating grace of God will cease to be a free gift, but become a reward to human merit.²⁴ However, our current predicament seriously calls this high view of human effort into question. If Adam in his upright condition eventually fell, how can we in our depraved condition escape the same fate? In Calvin's mind, the predicament of

²³ Lecture on Ezek. 11:19 (CO 40:247). English translation is from *Commentaries on Ezekiel* Vol 1. Calvin's Commentaries Vol. 11, T. Myers (trans.) originally for Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999) 378. The interrogative adverb *Quousque* may also carry a temporal overtone, for Calvin ardently argues for the continual, as well as invincible, intervention of the Spirit in believers' perseverance unto the eternal inheritance. See also *Inst.* (1559) II, 3, 9; 10; 13; 14 (CO 2:218-24). In these passages, the twofold grace of God in Phil. 2:13, i.e. grace to will and to be able, as well as Augustine's contrast between Adam's first innocent nature and our depraved one, substantially control Calvin's argument.

²⁴ *Inst.* (1559) II, 2, 6 (CO 2:190-1); II, 3, 11 (CO 2:221-2).

our depraved humanity calls for a much higher view of the intervention of the Holy Spirit. The human will of believers is able to pursue the glory in the midst of severe afflictions and temptations, not because our ineffective desire for good is remedied by the ability to will uprightly and to act uprightly, but because the Holy Spirit constantly and vigorously sustains us by unconquerable fortitude. Appealing to the support of Augustine in his *Rebuke and Grace*, Calvin boldly taught that the human will of believers is nowadays endowed with the freedom of *non posse peccare*:

The grace of persisting in good would have been given to Adam if he had so willed. It is given to us in order that we may will, and by will may overcome concupiscence. Therefore, he had the ability if he had so willed, but he did not will that he should be able. To us it is given both to will and to be able. The original freedom was to be able not to sin; but ours is much greater, not to be able to sin [*Primam fuisse libertatem, posse non peccare; nostram multo maiorem, non posse peccare*].²⁵

In his 1539 *Institutes*, Calvin firmly rejected the scholastic interpretation that Augustine is here speaking of the condition after the future resurrection. His understanding of human will, together with his reading of Augustine, aroused the attack from his Romanist opponent Albertus Pighius in 1542. In his treatise responding to Pighius, Calvin on the one hand defended his reading as faithfully reflecting the true position of the Bishop of Hippo; on the other hand, he also clarified his position on this freedom of *non posse peccare*:

But I add immediately after the second sentence that “the original freedom was to be able not to sin, while ours is a much greater one, not to be able to sin.” So he [Pighius] lashes me vehemently for being a dishonest forger, since I transfer to the present situation of the saints what was said about their future condition after the resurrection. I myself do not deny that the fullness of that

²⁵ *Inst.* (1559) II, 3, 13 (CO 2:223).

perfection which [Augustine] there describes does not yet exist, nor is it to be hoped for before the resurrection. But from this it does not follow that it has no relevance to the present situation. For now there begins in the saints what will then be fully completed [*Nunc enim inchoatur in sanctis, quod tunc adimplebitur*]. ... Therefore when he [Augustine] declares that the last freedom will be not to be able to sin, he is merely honouring the lasting grace of the kingdom of Christ, which, while now manifested only in part, will finally exist whole and entire after the resurrection [*Ergo quum novissimam libertatem fore testatur, non posse peccare, nihil aliud, quam perpetuam regni Christi gratiam commendat: quae tamen non nisi ex parte nunc manifestatur: ideo tota demum et integra post resurrectionem constabit*]. But [Pighius says] I also do not allow anyone to understand [that freedom] as referring to the future perfection which follows immortality. Of course, if anyone wanted so to drag it in that direction that it would not be right to apply it to this life [*nempe, si quis eo trahere sic velit, quasi ad hanc vitam referri non debeat*]. Moreover, this is [to say] only that the whole grace of regeneration is included here.²⁶

Therefore, Calvin was ready to concede that the fullness of the eschatological freedom is not yet manifest in the present day. However, one cannot shut it up absolutely in the future so that it becomes totally irrelevant to the present life. Further, as we have seen in the earlier chapter, this eschatological freedom of *non posse peccare* was first realised in Christ's humanity through invincible fortitude of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit is now repeating His sustaining work in believers' life to bring forth the first fruit of this eschatological freedom. His work (or in Calvin's word, His grace) is so efficacious that believers are firmly assured to be able to persevere unto the end. In emphasising its present existence, Calvin did not mean to suggest some notion of realised perfectionism. Quite the contrary, his logic was consistently the other way round: the

²⁶ *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii adversus calumnias Alberti Pighii Campensis* (1543) (CO 6:401-2); ET from *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice Against Pighius*, A. N. S. Lane (ed.) G. I. Davis (trans.) (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002) 240-2. See also D. F. Wright, "Non Posse Peccare in This Life? St. Augustine, De Correptione et Gratia 12:33," in *Studia Patristica* vol. XXXVIII. Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1999, M. F. Wiles & E. J. Yarnold (eds) (Leuven: Peeters, 2001) 348-353.

weaker the human nature is, the greater the gift needed from God. His basic concern was to divert our confidence and praise from feeble human ability to the continual and effective intervention of the Spirit:

When the Lord establishes his Kingdom in them [believers], he restrains their will by his Spirit that it may not according to its natural inclination be dragged to and fro by wandering lusts. That the will may be disposed to holiness and righteousness, He bends, shapes, forms, and directs it to the rule of his righteousness. That it may not totter and fall, he steadies and strengthens it by the power of his Spirit.²⁷

This passage, then, ought to stir us up to seek from God continually a spirit of perseverance, because such is our propensity to sin that we immediately flow in different directions like water, unless God strengthens us. When therefore we see the righteous themselves depart from the way, let us fear and become sure of the constancy of our own faith, only let our confidence be founded on the help of the Holy Spirit and not in ourselves [*timeamus et interea certisimus de constantia fidei nostrae, modo fundata sit fiducia nostra in auxilio spiritus sancti, et non in nobis*].²⁸

For Calvin, the work of the Spirit is so efficacious that believers are steered on a steady course unto the end, but this does not infer that they are then driven about like an inanimate object, losing the voluntary character of their human will. The freedom of *non posse peccare* is no less a human freedom, and our striving for Christ's glory is no less a human striving. Calvin agreed with Augustine that we act and are acted upon at the same time. But the divine and human activities are not operating in the same plane so that they can somehow be said to contribute in their own way to a certain joint venture. Believers, even in their very acts of obedience, are no less receivers of God's continual grace. In exercising this freedom of *non posse peccare*, which is formed and sustained by the

²⁷ *Inst.* (1559) II, 5, 14 (CO 2:242-3).

²⁸ Lecture on Ezek. 3:20 (CO 40:97) Myers 160.

unconquerable fortitude of the Spirit, believers are reminded that it is God and God alone who is actively and effectively preparing them to be fit for the future glory of the eternal inheritance.

In sum, as the Spirit is the Spirit of adoption and regeneration, He is also the Spirit of glory and perseverance in our present tribulations. It is the Spirit, and the Spirit alone, who overcomes the temporal and circumstantial barrier to lift up our mind to glimpse the hidden glory. It is also He alone who grants us the foretaste of the eschatological freedom of *non posse peccare* and fortifies us against the devil's attack. With this hope and strength, we patiently and diligently wait for the final victory to dawn.

II. Holy Spirit in the bodily resurrection

As discussed above, the whole Christian life is a progress of conformity to Christ. This conformity is, in turn, twofold, namely internal and external. As for the external aspect, believers are now conformed to the cross of their Head. With respect to the condition of Christ's kingly office, Calvin would say that Christ's kingdom is still in its hidden and humble condition. Oppositions are everywhere to resist Christ's reign. But at the Second Coming of Christ, His kingdom will come to its fullest manifestation and Christ will subdue all opposing forces. All obscurity will be overcome. Believers will then enter the final stage of conformity. They will be granted the eternal blessedness and their lowly body will be conformed to the glorious body of Christ in the bodily resurrection. For Calvin, this highest enjoyment or *summum bonum* is the ultimate union with God Himself:

If God contains the fullness of all good things in himself like an inexhaustible fountain, nothing beyond him is to be sought by those who strive after the highest good and all the elements of happiness [*si Deus bonorum omnium plenitudinem, ceu fons quidam inexhaustus, in se continet, nihil ultra eum expetendum iis qui ad summum bonum et omnes felicitatis numeros contendunt*], as we are taught in many passages. ... If the Lord will share his glory, power and righteousness with the elect – nay, will give himself to be enjoyed by them and, what is more excellent, will somehow make them to become one with himself, let us remember that every sort of happiness is included under this benefit [*Si Dominus gloriam, virtutem, iustitiam suam cum electis participabit, imo se ipsum illis fruendum dabit, et quod praestantius, quodammodo in unum cum ipsis coalescet, meminerimus sub hoc beneficio omne felicitatis genus contineri*].²⁹

²⁹ *Inst.* (1559) III, 25, 10 (CO 2:741-2). For Calvin, eternal life or death are not simply the infinite prolongation or mere annihilation of existence respectively. They are basically defined by our fellowship with God: “how wretched it is to be cut off from all fellowship with God. And not that only but so to feel his sovereign power against you that you cannot escape being pressed by it.” *Inst.* III, 25, 12 (CO 2:744);

Calvin acknowledged that ancient philosophers such as Plato had indeed glimpsed some light of this *summum bonum*, but they fell into vain speculations when they tried to seek it within human nature:

Whatever the philosophers have argued about the *summum bonum* was stupid and fruitless, because they confined man within himself, when the need was for us to go outside of ourselves to find happiness. The highest human good is therefore simply union with God [*Summum ergo hominis bonum nihil aliud est quam cum Deo coniunctio*]. We attain it when we are brought into conformity with His likeness.³⁰

For Calvin, this union can only result from the spiritual regeneration, in which our lost image of God is restored by the Spirit of regeneration.³¹ In other words, the final

“Would you know what the death of the soul is? It is to be without God – to be abandoned by God, and left to itself: for if God is its life, it loses its life when it loses the presence of God.” *Psychopannychia* (CO 5:204) T&T III 454; “The expression ‘not to be’, is equivalent to being estranged from God. For if He is the only being who truly is, those truly are not who are not in him; because they are perpetually cast down and discarded from his presence.” *Psychopannychia* (CO 5:228-9) T&T III 486; “And moreover let us mark that it was S. Paul’s meaning here to express our true immortality, which is to cleave to God. For the devil and the castaways cease not to live, though they be forsaken of God, but death were a thousand times better than that life. It had been better for them, they had never been born, or had perished straightway than to live upon this condition, to wit, to have God their enemy, and to be cast away of him.” Sermon 52 on 1 Tim. 6:15-16 (CO 53:621); ET is modified from *Sermons on Timothy and Titus*, trans. L. T., 1579 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983) 622.

³⁰ Comm. on Heb. 4:10 (CO 55:48) CCNT 48; see also Comm. on Heb. 4:3 (CO 55:47) CCNT 47; Comm. on 2 Pet. 1:4 (CO 55:446-7) CCNT 331; and *Inst.* (1559) III, 25, 2 (CO 2:729-30).

³¹ Comm. on Eph. 4:24 (CO 51:208) CCNT 191 “The regeneration of the godly is indeed, as is said in 2 Cor. 3:18, nothing else than the reformation of the image of God in them. But there is a far more rich and powerful grace of God in this second creation than in the first. Yet Scripture only considers that our highest perfection consists in our conformity and resemblance to God.” Here, according to his commentary on Gen. 2:7, the more rich and powerful grace is very likely referring to the gift of perseverance. Also, Comm. on Col. 3:10 (CO 52:121) CCNT 350: “Hence, too, we learn both what is the end of our regeneration (that is, that we may be made like God and that His glory may shine forth in us) and also what is the image of God which Moses speaks of; that is, the rectitude and integrity of the whole soul, so that man represents as in a mirror the wisdom, righteousness and goodness of God. ... Paul at the same time says that there is nothing better for the Colossians to aspire to, for our highest perfection and blessedness is to bear the image of God.” It is to be noted that bearing the image of God can even be regarded as our *summum bonum*.

glorification in the external conformity is actually the fruit and completion of the internal conformity to Christ:

And just as Adam is the originator of death, so Christ is the one with whom life has its origin. In the fifth chapter of Romans he uses the same contrast, but with this difference, that there he is dealing with spiritual life and death, but here the point at issue is the resurrection of the body, which is the fruit of the spiritual life [*quod illic de vita et morte spirituali disputat; hic autem agit de resurrectione carnis, quae spiritualis vitae fructus est*].³²

Since the ‘animal nature’, which we have first of all, is the image of Adam, so we will conform to Christ in His heavenly nature; and when that happens our restoration will be complete. For we now begin to bear the image of Christ, and we are daily being transformed into it more and more; but that image depends upon spiritual regeneration. But then, it will be restored to fullness, in our body as well as our soul; what has now begun will be brought to completion [*Nunc enim incipimus portare imaginem Christi et in dies magis ac magis in eam transformamur: sed ea imago in regeneratione spirituali consistit. Tunc autem ad plenum instaurabitur, tam in corpore quam in anima: et perficietur quod nunc inchoatum est*], and we will obtain in reality what as yet we are only hoping for.³³

To ‘life’ he [Paul] adds *immortality*, as if he had said ‘true and immortal life’, unless you prefer to take *life* to mean regeneration on which there follows a blessed immortality which is still the object of hope [*Nisi forte per vitam intelligere malis regenerationem, quam sequitur beata immortalitas quae adhuc speratur*]. For our life does not consist of what we have in common with the brute beasts, but rather of our participation in the image of God. But the true nature and value of that life does not appear in this world, to explain it he has properly added immortality, which is the revelation of that life which now lies concealed.³⁴

³² Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:21-22 (CO 49:546) CCNT 323. We change the translation of *fructus* from “reward” to “fruit”. In his commentary on Romans, Calvin gives a detailed exposition of the spiritual regeneration or conformity to Christ in chapter six.

³³ Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:49 (CO 49:560) CCNT 341. Also, *Psychopannychia* (CO 5:206-7) T&T III 457: “That shall be fulfilled in the body which has now been begun in the soul; or rather, that which has only been begun in the soul will be fulfilled both in the soul and the body: for this common death which we all undergo, as it were by a common necessity of nature, is rather to the elect a kind of passage to the highest degree of immortality, than either an evil or a punishment, and, as Augustine says, (De Discrimine Vitae Human. et Brut., c. 43,) is nothing else than the falling of the flesh, which does not consume the things connected with it, but divides them, seeing it restores each to its original.”

³⁴ Comm. on 2 Tim. 1:10 (CO 52:354) CCNT 298.

It is to be noted that our conformity to Christ can also be regarded as a restoration process of our image of God in Christ. In the present life, this process takes place in the soul, which in Calvin's thought is equivalent to our spiritual regeneration or internal conformity to Christ. When this process is brought to completion in the eschaton, what is now happening to the soul will be extended to the body. But what did Calvin mean by saying that the image of God is restored in our body, as it is restored in our soul? To answer this question, we have to examine his understanding of our image of God and its relation with our body. First of all, it is to be noted that Calvin did not identify the image of God with a certain faculty of the human soul such as reason. Nor did he understand it as man's status of viceroy delegated by God to rule over other creatures. Rather, it was used to express the mutual relation between God and man. When our whole being is well regulated in God's ordained rectitude and integrity, we are then in a position to reflect His glory as a mirror, representing God's wisdom, righteousness and goodness. In this condition, we are called to bear the image of God:

Therefore by this word [*image*] the perfection of our whole nature is designated, as it appeared when Adam was endued with a right judgment, had affections in harmony with reason, had all his senses sound and well-regulated, and truly excelled in everything good.³⁵

Hence, too, we learn both what is the end of our regeneration (that is, that we may be made like God and that His glory may shine forth in us) and also what is the image of God which Moses speaks of; that is, the rectitude and integrity of the whole soul [*totius animae rectitudo et integritas*], so that man represents as in a mirror the wisdom, righteousness and goodness of God.³⁶

³⁵ Comm. on Gen. 1:26 (CO 23:26-7); ET from *Commentaries on Genesis*, Calvin's Commentaries Vol. 1, J. King (trans.) originally for Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999) 94-5.

³⁶ Comm. on Col. 3:10 (CO 52:121) CCNT 350.

In the midst of the whole creation, human being is the only creature that God has endowed with this special gift in recognising and reflecting His glory. Although the human soul as such is not equal to the image of God, it is so uniquely and nobly constituted that it should be regarded as the proper seat of the image:

Furthermore, that man consists of a soul and a body ought to be beyond controversy. Now I understand by the term “soul” an immortal yet created essence, which is his nobler part [*quae nobilior eius pars est*]. ... With our intelligence we conceive the invisible God and the angels, something the body can by no means do. We grasp things that are right, just, and honourable, which are hidden to the bodily senses. Therefore the spirit must be the seat of this intelligence.³⁷

For although God’s glory shines forth in the outer man, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of His image is in the soul [*propriam tamen imaginis sedem in anima esse dubium non est*]. ... For Osiander, whose writings prove him to have been perversely ingenious in futile inventions, indiscriminately extending God’s image both to the body and to the soul, mingles heaven and earth.³⁸

Therefore, in Calvin’s thought, human soul takes priority over human body in the order of creation. Our harmony with God is first arising in the soul. And only in a derived manner is the body being incorporated into this order, thus sharing its glory:

Thus the chief seat of the divine image was in his mind and heart, where it was eminent [*Ita primaria sedes divinae imaginis in mente et corde fuit, ubi emineret*]: yet was there no part of him in which some scintillations of it did not shine forth. For there was an attempering in the several parts of the soul, which corresponded with their various offices. In the mind perfect intelligence flourished and reigned, uprightness attended as its companion, and all the senses were prepared and moulded for due obedience to reason; and in the body there was a suitable correspondence with this internal order [*in corpore aequabilis quaedam ad illum ordinem proportio*].³⁹

³⁷ *Inst.* (1559) I, 15, 2 (CO 2:135).

³⁸ *Inst.* (1559) I, 15, 3 (CO 2:136-7).

³⁹ *Comm. on Gen.* 1:26 (CO 23:26-7) King 94-5.

Accordingly, the integrity with which Adam was endowed is expressed by this word, when he had full possession of right understanding, when he had his affections kept within the bounds of reason, all his senses tempered in right order, and he truly referred his excellence to exceptional gifts bestowed upon him by his Maker. And although the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and heart, or in the soul and its powers, yet there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks did not glow [*Ac quamvis primaria sedes divinae imaginis fuerit in mente et corde, vel in anima eiusque potentiis, nulla tamen pars fuit etiam usque ad corpus, in qua non scintillae aliquae micarent*].⁴⁰

After the Fall of Adam, this image of God was totally corrupted. His whole posterity have contracted from him a hereditary taint and fallen in the same corrupted state, until some of them have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, renewing this lost image. However, even in the order of regeneration, this priority of the soul over the body still stands valid:

Now we are to see what Paul chiefly comprehends under this renewal. In the first place he posits knowledge, then pure righteousness and holiness. From this we infer that, to begin with, God's image was visible in the light of the mind, in the uprightness of the heart, and in the soundness of all the parts. For although I confess that these forms of speaking are synecdoches, yet this principle cannot be overthrown, that what was primary in the renewing of God's image also held the highest place in the creation itself [*quod in renovatione imaginis Dei praecipuum est, in ipsa etiam creatione tenuisse summum gradum*].⁴¹

Therefore, with respect to both creation and regeneration, Calvin thought that our body is the weaker part of our whole being. The body can reflect the glory of God's image, only insofar as its nobler counterpart is first restored to its integrity and rectitude.

⁴⁰ *Inst.* (1559) I, 15, 3 (CO 2:138).

⁴¹ *Inst.* (1559) I, 15, 4 (CO 2:138).

Calvin was quite ready to describe the body as the prison of the soul, which hinders its nobler part in the progress of attaining full fellowship with God.⁴² In his earliest theological treatise *Psychopannychia*, it is not entirely clear whether Calvin did not actually so identify the physical body with the Pauline “flesh” as to teach that the setting free of the soul from its body at physical death is equivalent to the quickening of the spirit:

The body, which decays, weighs down the soul, and confining it within an earthly habitation, greatly limits its perceptions [*Corpus, quod corrumpitur, aggravat animam, et terrena habitatio deprimit sensum multa cogitantem*]. If the body is the prison of the soul, if the earthly habitation is a kind of fetters, what is the state of the soul when set free from this prison, when loosed from these fetters [*Si corpus animae est carcer, si terrena habitatio, compedes sunt: quid anima soluta hoc carcere, exuta his vinculis*]? Is it not restored to itself, and as it were made complete, so that we may truly say, that all which it gains is so much lost to the body? Whether they [i.e. those holding the view that the departed soul remains in an inactive or unconscious state until final resurrection] will or not, they must be forced to confess, that when we put off the load of the body, the war between the spirit and the flesh ceases [*Ubi molem hanc corporis abiicimus, cessare pugnam illam spiritus adversus carnem, et carnis adversus spiritum*]. In short, the mortification of the flesh is the quickening of the spirit. Then the soul, set free from impurities, is truly spiritual, so as to the tyranny of the flesh, rebelling against it. In short, the mortification of the flesh will be the quickening of the spirit: For then the soul, having shaken off all kinds of pollution, is truly spiritual, so that it

⁴² “But no one in this earthly prison of the body has sufficient strength to press on with due eagerness, and weakness so weighs down the greater number that, with wavering and limping and even creeping along the ground, they move at a feeble rate. ... But we shall attain it [goodness] only when we have cast off the weakness of the body, and are received into full fellowship with him [Christ].” *Inst.* (1559) III, 6, 5 (*CO* 2:505); “If to be freed from the body is to be released into perfect freedom, what else is the body but a prison? If to enjoy the presence of God is the summit of happiness, is not to be without this, misery?” III, 9, 4 (*CO* 2:526); “But the groaning of believers arises from their knowledge that here they are exiles from their native land and are shut up in the body as in a prison house, and so they count this life a burden because in it they cannot obtain true and perfect happiness because they cannot escape the slavery of sin except by death and so they wish to be elsewhere.” *Comm.* on 2 Cor. 5:4 (*CO* 50:62) *CCNT* 68; both here and in the next quotation, we change the translation of *ergastulo* from “work-house” to “prison house”; “Christ, the Sun of the righteousness, does indeed shine forth in the Gospel, but in such a way that the darkness of death always partly possesses our minds until we are released from the prison house of the flesh and carried off into heaven.” *Comm.* on 2 Pet. 1:19 (*CO* 55:456) *CCNT* 341.

consents to the will of God, and is no longer subjected to the tyranny of the flesh; thus dwelling in tranquillity, with all its thoughts fixed on God.⁴³

This early ambiguity was wiped away in his 1539 *Institutes*, in which Calvin clearly asserted that the whole human nature, both the nobler and lower parts, is without exception plunged into a corrupt state. In his Commentary on Romans in the following year, he qualified the peculiar meaning of the word “body” in Rom. 8:10 as “the more stolid mass as yet unpurified by the Spirit of God”. In the final edition of this commentary in 1556, he further clarified his view by adding:

It would be absurd otherwise to ascribe to the body the blame for sin. Again, the soul is so far from being life, that it does not even of itself have life. Paul’s meaning, therefore, is that, although sin condemns us to death in so far as the corruption of our first nature still remains in us, yet the Spirit of God is victorious.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Psychopannychia* (CO 5:196) T&T III 443-4. This treatise was written in 1534 but not published until 1542. The idea of physical death as the liberation of soul is frequently found in this treatise, and Calvin appeals to Pauline authority to support his view: “These things are splendidly and magnificently handled by Paul. (Rom. 8:10) ‘If the Spirit of Christ dwell in us, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.’ He no doubt calls the body the mass of sin, which resides in man from the native property of the flesh; and the spirit the part of man spiritually regenerated. Wherefore, when a little before he deplored his wretchedness because of the remains of sin adhering to him, (Rom. 7:24), he did not desire to be taken away altogether, or to be nothing, in order that he might escape from that misery, but to be freed from the body of death, i.e., that the mass of sin in him might die, that the spirit, being purged, and, as it were, freed from dregs, he might have peace with God through this very circumstance; declaring, that his better part was held captive by bodily chains and would be freed by death.” *Psychopannychia* (CO 5:194) T&T III 439-40. In discussing Calvin’s use of the Pauline contrast of flesh and spirit, Quistorp accuses Calvin of not being true to his own exegetical insight: “Although, following Paul, Calvin is aware of a struggle between the flesh and spirit in the soul, he permits himself this simplifying identification of the soul and spirit which modifies the Pauline contrast of σὰρξ and πνεῦμα.” Quistorp 74. This view might have something to do with his later comment: “What he says about pure spirituality of the vision of God in eternity might be viewed as pointing in this direction, for spiritual always implies for Calvin non-corporeal.” Quistorp 171. We have to admit that Calvin’s actual position in this early treatise is far from clear. However, Quistorp’s reading is not the only possible one of the text, for it is equally possible to argue in the opposite direction that the usage of the word *corpus* here may be quite different from its usual meaning, seeing that Calvin takes pains to qualify it as “the mass of sin”. At any rate, that “spiritual always implies for Calvin non-corporeal” cannot do justice even to the young Calvin at the time of writing his first theological treatise, for evidence shows that he embraces the Pauline usage that the adjective “spiritual” can be ascribed to the body as well.

⁴⁴ Comm. on Rom. 8:10 (CO 49:145) CCNT 165. In this respect, Calvin no doubt benefits from his disputation with Albertus Pighius in 1543. In his polemical writing against the Dutch theologian, Calvin accuses him of misunderstanding Paul: “He [Paul] says that the cause of this resistance is sin which dwells

Therefore, at least in his mature thought, Calvin did not simply identify the physical body as such with the Pauline “flesh”. Correspondingly, “spirit” or “spiritual” in his thought is not an antithesis of “corporeal”, but a pointer to the fact that the Holy Spirit is efficaciously bringing forth a new nature while destroying the old (i.e. the flesh). For Calvin, behind the apparently negative evaluation of the body as “the prison of the soul” stands his emphasis on the continual progress of this dual work of the Spirit, namely the dying of the old and raising of the new. As the soul always runs ahead of the body, the death of the outward man (i.e. the end of the external conformity to Christ’s cross) marks the completion of the dying process of the inner man (i.e. internal mortification or internal conformity to Christ). In this sense, the decay of the outer man is not a loss to believers, but a gain:

Nothing that befalls us can shake our confidence and courage because death, which others dread so much, is to us great gain. For there is nothing better than to leave the body that we may share God’s dwelling place and enjoy His real and open presence. Thus for us the decay of the outer man brings no loss.⁴⁵

Thus, Calvin artfully turned the ultimate misery of external mortification (i.e. physical death) to be a penultimate happiness of internal mortification, in which the soul finally wins the warfare on earth and rests from all the internal conflicts raised by the

within him, and at the same time names the part of him in which it dwells – namely the flesh. But Pighius understands him to mean the body when he mentions the flesh. The body, however, has of itself no feeling of its own, and Paul does not mean just any feeling, but a deliberate desire which is opposed to the Spirit. Now the question is, what is the origin of the resistance if it is not from the imperfection which consists in the fact that both the human mind and the human will are not yet wholly reformed by the Spirit of God into newness of life, but in some part still smack of the flesh and the earth?” *De servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii* (CO 6:357) Lane 180.

⁴⁵ Comm. on 2 Cor. 5:8 (CO 50:63-4) CCNT 70.

remain of its sins. For believers, physical death catches our eye not by its distressing decay of the body, but by its marking off the progress of the soul. This firm conviction of the ceaseless working of God, as well as our corresponding ceaseless progress, is the theological impetus behind Calvin's doctrine of the immortality of the soul:

And if God is the life of the soul, just as the soul is the life of the body, how can it be that the soul keeps acting upon the body so long as it is in the body, and never is for an instant idle, and yet that God should cease from acting as if He were fatigued [*quid est quod anima, quamdiu in corpore est, ipsum agitat, nec unquam ita otiosa est, intentionemque suam remittit, ut non aliqua officii parte fungatur, Deus autem velut agendo fatigatus cessat*]! If such is the vigour of the soul in sustaining, moving and impelling a lump of clay, how great must be the energy of God in moving and actuating the soul to which agility is natural!⁴⁶

These men not only intermit the work of God for a time, but even extinguish it. Those who formerly went from faith to faith, from virtue to virtue, and enjoyed a foretaste of blessedness when they exercised themselves in thinking of God, they deprive both of faith and virtue, and all thought of God, and merely place on beds, in a sluggish and lethargic state! For how do they interpret that progress? [*Qui prius ibant de fide in fidem, de virtute in virtutem, et beatitudinis gustu fruebantur, quum se in Dei cogitatione exercerent, eos et fide, et virtute, et omni Dei cogitatione exuunt: desides tantum et veteranos in stratis collocant. Quomodo enim profectum illum interpretantur?*]⁴⁷

First, we wish it to be held as an acknowledged point, as we have already explained, that our blessedness is always in progress up to that day which shall conclude and terminate all progress, and that thus the glory of the elect, and complete consummation of hope, look forward to that day for their fulfilment. For it is admitted by all, that perfection of blessedness or glory nowhere exists except in perfect union with God.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Psychopannychia* (CO 5:195) T&T III 441. This insistence on God's ceaseless sovereignty is also expressed in Calvin's rejection of millennialism, in which Christ's kingdom will cease after a certain period of time. See *Inst.* (1559) III, 25, 5 (CO 2:734-5).

⁴⁷ *Psychopannychia* (CO 5:197) T&T III 444 .

⁴⁸ *Psychopannychia* (CO 5:211) T&T III 463.

Of course, there still remain the questions: What makes the difference between the penultimate and ultimate blessedness of the soul? Is there really any room for the soul to make progress after this penultimate state of blessedness? Is the bodily resurrection then bringing any gain to the soul? In this respect, Calvin was quite restrained from further elaboration and content with a formal insistence that the fullness of the blessedness is still reserved in the ultimate state, on which this penultimate blessedness depends:

But even if fullness of vision will be delayed until the day of Christ, we will begin to have a closer view of God as soon as we die [*Tametsi autem differetur ad diem Christi plena visio: incipiet tamen statim a morte propinquior Dei adspectus*]. Our souls will then be set free from our bodies, and will have no further need of either the external ministry or other inferior aids. But Paul (as I pointed out before) is not anxious to discuss the state of the dead, because knowledge about that is of little value for godliness.⁴⁹

We are more miserable than all men if there is no Resurrection, because, although we are happy before the Resurrection, we are not happy without the Resurrection. For we say that the spirits of saints are happy in this, that they rest in the hope of a blessed Resurrection, which they could not do, were all this blessedness to perish.⁵⁰

With this [earthly house of our tabernacle] Paul contrasts a building that will last for ever, although it is not clear whether he means by this the state of blessed immortality that awaits believers after death or the incorruptible and glorious body as it will be after the resurrection. Either meaning is quite suitable, but I prefer to take it that the blessed state of the soul after the death is the beginning of this building, but its completion is the glory of the final resurrection [*Quamquam malo ita accipere, ut initium huius aedificii sit beatus animae status post mortem: consummatio autem sit gloria ultimae resurrectionis*].⁵¹

The ultimate blessedness is actually the enlargement of the penultimate blessedness. As the soul is now elevated to a new spiritual condition and invincibly strengthened by

⁴⁹ Comm. on 1 Cor. 13:12 (CO 49:515) CCNT 282.

⁵⁰ *Psychopannychia* (CO 5:218) T&T III 472.

⁵¹ Comm. on 2 Cor 5:1 (CO 50:61) CCNT 67.

the Holy Spirit, the body will also be elevated to a new spiritual condition and invincibly strengthened by the same Spirit at the bodily resurrection. With the bond of the same Spirit, the body will be connected again with the soul. Its mortal and corruptible quality will be transformed to immortal and incorruptible, so that it will become fully compatible with the direct vision and communion with God, which the soul enjoys to a somewhat lesser extent in its penultimate state:

Because he [Paul] could not enumerate every single aspect [of resurrection], he embraces them all in one word, saying that the body is now *animale* and then it will be *spirituale*. Further, the name *animale* is given to that which is determined by the soul; the name *spirituale* to that which is determined by the Spirit [*Porro vocatur animale, quod ab anima; spirituale, quod a spiritu informatur*]. For it is the soul which gives life to the body, and prevents it from becoming a corpse; and so it is only right that it should be described in terms of the soul. But after the resurrection that life-giving power which it receives from the Spirit will be more predominant. But let us always remember what we have seen already, that there is but one and the same substance of the body, and that it is only the quality which is referred to here [*unam esse substantiam corporis; ac tantum hic agi de qualitate*]. To make it quite clear, let the present quality of the body be called ‘animation’; and its future quality, ‘inspiration’ [*Praesens corporis qualitas vocetur, docendi gratia, animatio; futura vocetur inspiratio*]. For as far as the soul’s giving of life to the body now is concerned, that involves the intervention of many aids; for we need drink, food, clothing, sleep and other things like them. That proves to us beyond the shadow of a doubt how frail a thing ‘animation’ is. But the power of the Spirit for giving life will be much fuller, and for that reason independent of necessities of that sort.⁵²

⁵² Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:44 (CO 49:557) CCNT 337-8. Fraser translates the word *animale* as “natural”. But then its obvious philological connection with the word *anima*, as well as its contrast with *spirituale*, will be lost, so we prefer to leave it untranslated. In Calvin’s language, *spiritus* can also refer to the intellectual faculty of the soul in its natural, created condition or the purified part of the soul in its regenerated condition, but the context here calls for a meaning which is utterly superior to the function of human soul even in its regenerated condition. Beyond doubt, Calvin should have the Spirit of God in his mind. Also, the verb *informatur*, which Fraser translates as “determined”, was rendered as “quickened” in an older translation. It seems that both translations cannot reflect Calvin’s allusion to the philosophical overtone of a form conferred upon matter. For instance, the faculty of willing is the created substance or the matter of human will, while the quality of willing badly or well is the form engraven by sins or the Holy Spirit respectively. Lastly, it is to be noted that the cessation of inferior aids and thus the immediate efficacy of the Holy Spirit are the very mark of the eschatological glory. The ultimate unity and harmony between soul and body is attained through the Spirit’s direct guidance and sustenance of both.

It is worth noting that there is a striking parallel between the mode of the restoration of the body and that of the soul. While arguing that the Spirit will destroy our old and corrupted will, Calvin did not mean to undermine the integrity of its natural endowment and expose himself to the charge of Manichaeism. His solution was to invoke the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accidental quality.⁵³ As the Holy Spirit is regenerating the human will, the integrity is preserved at the level of substance of the will (and thus the soul as a whole), whereas the radical transformation takes place at the level of quality:

For in relation to the present issue, following Bernard I proposed three things for consideration: to will per se, that is, simply to will; then to will badly; and [to will] well. The first is the faculty of willing or, if preferred, the substance. To will well and badly are qualities or opposed habits which belong to the power itself [*Primum illud est volendi facultas, aut, si ita placet, substantia. Bene et male velle, sunt qualitates, vel habitus contrarii, qui in potentiam ipsam cadunt*]. ... Having defined these three things, I had taught that the will is perpetually resident in our nature, that the evil condition of the will results from the corruption of that nature, and that by the regeneration of the Spirit the evil condition is corrected and in that way the will is made good instead of evil. ... To be brief: I say that the will is evil not by nature (that is, by God's creation) but by the corruption of nature, and that it cannot be otherwise until it is changed to be good by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Nor do I imagine that a new product or a new creature is made in such a way that with the destruction of the former substance a new one takes its place. For I explicitly mention that the will remains in man just as it was originally implanted in him, and so the change takes place in the habit, not in the substance [*Voluntatem enim nominatim commemoro, sicut homini est ab initio ingenta, semper manere: in habitu igitur, non in substantia, esse mutationem*].⁵⁴

⁵³ In discussing Calvin's use of Aristotle in the treatise *De servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii*, Lane rightly observes, "This use of the Aristotelian distinction is fundamental to Calvin's argument." Lane xxv-xxvi. In this 1543 treatise, the use of this distinction is confined to the debate regarding the nature of human will. However, it is equally fundamental in understanding Calvin's position on our communion with Christ, bodily resurrection as well as cosmic restoration.

⁵⁴ *De servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii* (CO 6:378-9) Lane 209-10; see also *Inst.* (1559) II, 1, 11 (CO 2: 184-5). Here "habit" is a scholastic term, which, in Calvin's usage, is a synonym of accidental quality in contrast with the unchanged substance. Calvin can also express the same idea with another philosophical pair, i.e. matter-form: "The will is as it were the matter, suited and able to receive form; before it is renewed, it is badly formed through natural depravity. But when it is renewed so as to acquire

By the same token, Calvin could say that those remaining alive at Christ's Second Coming will also undergo the same destruction of their flesh as those departed souls did, which is rightly called a death to them as well. But this so-called destruction is actually a radical transformation of quality, whereas the substance of the body remains intact:

As I have said, however, it is a kind of death when this flesh is destroyed, even as it is now subject to corruption. The only difference is that those who sleep put off the substance of the body for a space of time, while those who will be suddenly renewed will put off nothing but the quality [*quod qui dormiunt aliquo temporis spatio, corporis exuunt substantiam: qui autem subito innovabuntur, non nisi qualitatem exuent*].⁵⁵

First, we must hold, as I have indicated, that as to substance we shall be raised again in the same flesh we now bear, but that the quality will be different [*Primo tenendum est quod diximus, nos in eadem quam gestamus carne resurrecturos quoad substantiam; sed qualitatem aliam fore*]. So it was that, when the same flesh of Christ which had been offered as a sacrifice was raised up, it yet excelled in other gifts as if it had become utterly different.⁵⁶

Indeed, this distinction of substance and quality is crucial to Calvin's eschatological conceptions such as perfection of our image of God, union with God and participation of divine glory.⁵⁷ The intricate balance between union and integrity of different parties cannot be maintained without this distinction being taken into account:

goodness by the Spirit of God, it as it were puts on another form." *De servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii* (CO 6:392) Lane 226.

⁵⁵ Comm. on 1 Thes. 4:16 (CO 52:167) CCNT 365-6; see also Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:51 (CO 49:561-2) CCNT 343.

⁵⁶ *Inst.* (1559) III, 25, 8 (CO 2:739-40). Also, Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:53 (CO 49:563) CCNT 344: "And this verse plainly confirms that we shall rise in the very same flesh that we have now, for the apostle has assigned it a new quality, as if it were a garment [nos in hac eadem quam gestamus carne resurrecturos, cui novam qualitatem tanquam vestimentum attribuit]."; see also Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:39 (CO 49:556) CCNT 336.

⁵⁷ To the list may be added even the cosmic restoration: "He [Peter] reasons this way, that as heaven and earth will be cleansed by fire so that they may be fit for the kingdom of Christ, so renewal is a far greater

He [Peter] points out that the excellence of the promises arises from the fact that they make us partakers of the divine nature, than which nothing more outstanding can be imagined. ... We should notice that it is the purpose of the Gospel to make us sooner or later like God; indeed it is, so to speak, a kind of deification [*Notemus ergo hunc esse evangelii finem, ut aliquando conformes Deo reddamur: id vero est quasi deificari*]. The word *nature* does not denote substance but quality [*Caeterum naturae nomen hic non substantiam sed qualitatem designat*]. The Manicheans used to dream that we took our roots from the stem of God and that when we have finished the course of our life we shall revert to our original state. Likewise today there are fanatics who imagine that we cross over into God's nature so that His nature absorbs ours. ... This kind of madness never occurred to the minds of the holy apostles. They were simply concerned to say that when we have put off all the vices of the flesh we shall be partakers of divine immortality and the glory of blessedness, and thus we shall be in a way one with God so far as our capacity allows [*tantum dicere voluerunt, nos omnibus carnis vitiis exutos, sed divinae immortalitatis beataeque gloriae fore participes, ut simus velut unum cum Deo, quantum modulus noster feret*].⁵⁸

In sum, the bodily resurrection is the glorious end of our external conformity to Christ, as well as the completion of our spiritual regeneration, i.e. the internal conformity to Christ. In either realm of conformity, the work of the Holy Spirit is twofold, namely elevating and uniting. As in the internal process the Spirit unites us to Christ by raising our soul to a new spiritual condition, so in the external process He will also unite our body and soul by raising the body to a new spiritual condition. In this way, the restoration of our image of God, which has now begun in the soul, will be fulfilled both in the body and the soul. In either realm of conformity, the Holy Spirit is so working that the substance of that which is acted on will remain unchanged while a new spiritual

need in men. ... I shall say just one thing about the elements of the world, that they will be consumed only in order to receive a new quality while their substance remains the same, as can easily be concluded from Romans 8:21 and other passages." Comm. on 2 Pet. 3:10 (CO 55:476) CCNT 365.

⁵⁸ Comm. on 2 Pet. 1:4 (CO 55:446) CCNT 330. For consistency, we change the translation of *substantiam* and *qualitatem* from "essence" and "kind" to "substance" and "quality" respectively.

quality is imparted. In this way, the unequal parties (such as divinity and humanity, Christ the Head and believers the members, or human soul and human body) will remain distinct and unmixed, yet be brought into a perfect harmony by the affinity of their common spiritual qualities, which, from the human side, can be called our image of God in its perfection.

III. *Extra Calvinisticum* in the Eschaton

In the preceding sections, we have examined how the Holy Spirit works in the two stages of our conformity to Christ in Christian life. These two stages coincide with the two conditions of Christ's kingly office, with His Second Coming as the turning point. In other words, the different modes of the Spirit's guiding and sustaining in these stages also mark the change in form of Christ's ruling. In the present, Christ rules in the person of the incarnate Mediator. According to Calvin, we have to hold that the incarnate Mediator is no longer physically present in our midst, because His flesh has already reached its glorious condition and been contained in the heaven away from our world of corrupt order. A distance between the Mediator in heaven and us on this miserable world is therefore established, which Calvin regarded as important to the extent that it provides the eschatological propensity in prompting us to hope for something higher. However, we should also hold firmly that His guidance and protection in our present life is not compromised in the slightest. This paradox is actually another form of the so-called

extra Calvinisticum, in which Christ in the person of the incarnate Mediator continues to rule, as He in His flesh is contained in the heaven:

There is a commonplace distinction of the schools to which I am not ashamed to refer: although the whole Christ is everywhere, still the whole of that which is in him is not everywhere [*quamvis totus Christus ubique sit, non tamen totum quod in eo est, ubique esse*]. ... Therefore, since the whole Christ is everywhere, our Mediator is ever present with his own people, and in the Supper reveals himself in a special way, yet in such a way that the whole Christ is present, but not in his wholeness [*Mediator ergo noster quum totus ubique sit, suis semper adest; et in coena speciali modo praesentem se exhibet, sic tamen ut totus adsit, non totum*]. For, as has been said, in his flesh he is contained in heaven until he appears in judgement.⁵⁹

In order to avoid any direct exchange of properties between divine and human essences, this ubiquitous ruling is handled pneumatologically in Calvin's thought. The Holy Spirit is the one who secretly bridges the spatial gap between earth and heaven, and transcends the discrepancy between visible shame and invisible glory as well as the time lag between the present and the future. It is He and He alone who motivates us by making known the hidden glory, who realises even in our present life the foretaste of the eschatological freedom so that we can persevere unto the end. By the secret virtue of the Spirit, the incarnate Mediator draws His people upwards and forwards to Himself until the day of judgement. But what will be the situation after the judgement? What is the *terminus ad quem* of this so-called *extra Calvinisticum*?

⁵⁹ *Inst.* (1559) IV, 17, 30 (CO 2:1032). Also, *Dilucida explicatio* (CO 9:476) LCC XXII 275: "To express this in a still more palpable form, I employed the trite phrase of the schools, that *totus Christus sit ubique sed non totum*. In other words, being entire in the person of the Mediator, he fills heaven and earth, though in his flesh he be in heaven, where he has chosen as the abode of his human nature until he appears for judgement."; and (CO 9:507) LCC XXII 311-2: "We do not deny that Christ, whole and entire, in the person of the Mediator, fills heaven and earth. I say *totus non totum*, because it would be absurd to apply this to his flesh. The hypostatic union of the two natures is not equivalent to a communication of the immensity of the Godhead to the flesh, since the properties of both natures are perfectly congruous with unity of person."

To understand his position regarding these questions, we have to know how Calvin understood the ruling of God in terms of His employment of intermediaries. As mentioned before, Calvin thought that the kingdom of God or Christ is now in a hidden condition. This hiddenness also means that God does not exert His efficacious ruling in an immediate and undeniable manner. Instead, He rules indirectly and thus less threateningly by employing various kinds of instruments or intermediaries. First and foremost, His kingdom is now established through the proclamation of the Gospel. In this sense, preaching, as well as all the churchly ministries, is a means of accommodation employed by God to approach and teach His people in a familiar manner. Secondly, God also protects His people and governs the world through commissioning different kinds of authorities, both on earth and in heaven. However, at the day of judgement, all these intermediaries will cease their service:

Now although that has begun to be fulfilled under the rule of Christ, it will not, however, be brought to absolute completeness until the last day. It will then be necessary for every exalted thing to come to an end, so that the glory of God may alone be resplendent. Further, we are aware that all earthly rules and positions of authority have to do only with the maintaining of life as we know it here, and are, for that reason, an integral part of this world, and, it follows from that, in turn, that they are temporary things. Therefore, as the world will come to an end, so also will polity, magistracy, laws, distinctions in order, degrees of honour and everything of that sort. ... Furthermore, there will then be an end both to the rule which angels exercise in heaven, and to the offices of ministers and overseers in the Church, so that God alone may exercise His own power and dominion through Himself, not through the hands of men or angels [*Quin etiam tum in coelo principatus angelici, tum in ecclesia cessabunt ministeria et praefecturae: ut solus Deus per se ipsum, non per hominum vel angelorum manus potestatem suam principatumque exerceat*]. Of course there will still be angels, and they will also retain their superiority. The righteous will also be resplendent, each one according to his measure of grace. But the angels will give up the rule, which they now exercise in the name, and by the commandment, of God. Bishops, teachers

and prophets will sustain their roles no longer, and will lay down the office which they are now discharging.⁶⁰

When the rule of Christ comes to its full manifestation, the direct dominion of God will leave no room for any heavenly or earthly office. This does not mean that those now in authority will be annihilated or absorbed into the divinity, but it does mean that the need for their accommodating function will come to an end:

But when Christ has carried out the judgement which the Father has entrusted to Him, and overthrown Satan and all the disobedient, then the glory of God will be seen in their destruction. The same thing can also be said about authorities, which are sacred and lawful in their own character, for in a sense they hold us back, so that God may not now appeal to us properly as He is in Himself [*Idem potest dici etiam de potestatibus sanctis et legitimis in suo genere. Impediunt enim quodammodo ne Deus in se ipso nobis recte nunc appareat*]. But then God will be governing heaven and earth by Himself, without any intermediary, and then in that way He will be all; and in consequence He will finally be in all, and not in all persons only, but in all created things as well [*Deus autem per se ipsum tunc et absque medio coeli et terrae gubernacula tenens, omnia erit in hac parte: et tandem consequenter in omnibus, non tantum personis, sed etiam creaturis*].⁶¹

The current function of the intermediaries is to communicate to us God's will and benefits according to our feeble capacity. However, in so doing, they cannot but hold us back from the direct vision of God's glory. When Christ overcomes all His opposition, our body as well as our soul will be elevated to such an extent that they will be able to have a direct vision of God without the help of these inferior aids. This final weaning from creaturely ministries is the eschatological equivalent of Calvin's *sursum corda* in his eucharistic liturgy, which constantly reminds us that the sacrament can fulfil its ministry only by not detaining us. However, even more strikingly, Calvin applied the

⁶⁰ Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:24 (CO 49:546-7) CCNT 324.

⁶¹ Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:28 (CO 49:549-50) CCNT 328.

same principle to the office of the incarnate Mediator when he commented on Christ's handing back the kingdom to the Father in 1 Cor. 15:27:

For how will these statements harmonise with each other: 'Of his kingdom there will be no end' (2 Pet. 1:11), and 'He will also be subjected' (Phil. 2:8)? By answering this problem we will see more clearly what Paul meant. In the first place we must observe that all power was handed over to Christ, in that He was manifested in the flesh. Such great majesty would not be appropriate for a mere man, but nevertheless the Father exalted Him in the self-same nature in which He was humbled, and gave unto Him the name before which every knee should bow etc. (Phil. 2:8). Further, we must note that He has been appointed Lord and supreme King so that He may be the Father's Viceregent, so to speak, in the governing of the world [*Deinde notandum est, sic constitutum esse dominum et summum regem, ut in gubernando mundo sit tanquam patris vicarius*]. It is not the case, however, that He does all the work, while the Father does nothing. (For how could that be, seeing that He is the wisdom and counsel of God, that He is of one essence with Him, and is therefore also God?) But the reason why Scripture bears witness to the fact that Christ now holds the sovereignty over heaven and earth in place of the Father, is that we may not think of anyone else as ruler, lord, defender, or judge of the living and the dead, but that we keep our eyes fixed on Him and Him alone. Of course we acknowledge God is the Ruler, but in the face of the man Christ [*sed in facie hominis Christi*].⁶² But Christ will then hand back the Kingdom which He has received, so that we may cleave completely to God. This does not mean that He will abdicate from the Kingdom in this way, but will transfer it in some way or other from His humanity to His glorious divinity, because then there will open up for us a way of approach, from which we are now kept back by our weakness [*Neque hoc modo regnum a se abdicabit, sed ab humanitate sua ad gloriosam divinitatem quodammodo traducet: quia tunc patebit accessus, quo nunc infirmitas nostra nos arcet*]. In this way, therefore, Christ will be subjected to the Father, because, when the veil has been removed, we will see God plainly, reigning in His majesty, and the humanity of Christ will no longer be in between us to hold us back from a nearer vision of God [*Sic ergo Christus subiicietur patri: quia tunc remoto velo*⁶³ *palam cernemus Deum in sua maiestate regnantem: neque amplius media erit Christi humanitas quae nos ab ulteriore Dei conspectu cohibeat*].⁶⁴

⁶² For the phrase "sed in facie hominis Christi", we take a more literal translation than Fraser's rendering "but His rule is actualised in the man Christ".

⁶³ Regarding the word *velo* here, Muller suggests, "The 'veil' to which Calvin refers is not so much Christ's humanity as our infirmity" R. A. Muller, "Christ in the Eschaton," *Harvard Theological Review* 74 (1981) 31-59, at 47. This interpretation is too forced to be acceptable. We agree that for Calvin the need of intermediaries is arising from our present infirmity and that its cessation marks the elevation of our humanity. However, this does not alter the fact that Calvin holds everywhere that it is the intermediary itself which, as a veil, hinders our vision of God. In view of this, his customary exhortation to the godly in

Here Calvin was dealing with two apparently contradictory groups of scriptural texts. One group asserts that there will be no end of Christ's kingdom, while the other intimates that after the last judgement Christ will deliver the kingdom to the Father and also be subjected to Him. Obviously, the present text of 1 Cor. 15:27 belongs to the latter group. According to Calvin, this group is the classic example of those texts which refer to neither the divine nature alone nor the human nature alone, but both at the same time. Such great majesty of ruling all things and judging all people would not be appropriate for a mere man. However, as the one true God with the Father, the reign of the eternal Son will not come to an end. Therefore, this group of texts is referring to the *medius gradus* or the person of Mediator. These statements: "Of his kingdom there will be no end" and "He will also be subjected", are then "harmonised" along the same line as marked out by the *extra Calvinisticum*: "the Word has descended to us in a more familiar way by clothing Himself wholly in the flesh" and "the Word also fills everywhere and rules all things by remaining wholly outside the flesh as before". The appointed lordship and kingship through the mediation of Christ's flesh is described as a means of accommodation. In this way, it is a two-edged sword, just as all other creaturely ministries. On the one hand, it provides aids to our current feeble condition, so that we can keep our eyes fixed on Him and Him alone and thus will not be lost in so many false

face of those intermediaries is: "In summa, quum inferiores causae, tanquam vela, Deum e conspectu nostro subducere ut plurimum soleant: fidei oculo altius penetrandum est, ut Dei manum in his organis operantem cernat." *De aeterna Dei praedestinatione* (1552) (CO 8:352). The "veil" in the current context is without ambiguity referring to Christ's humanity. If there is any hope to argue that no ontological change of Christ's person is implied in Calvin's thought, Muller should offer his insight about the passive participle *remoto* rather than the noun *velo*. Indeed, just as in the cases of all other intermediaries, this *remoto* to which Calvin refers is not an ontological annihilation, but a cessation of office.

⁶⁴ Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:27 (CO 49:549) CCNT 327.

lords on earth. On the other hand, Christ's humanity as a veil cannot but hold us back from a nearer vision of God. Yet, the movement of descent is not meant to diminish in the slightest Christ's divine majesty, but to initiate a corresponding movement of elevation in believers, so that one day we are able to have a direct vision of this majesty. With reference to this higher end, Christ's humanity can fulfil its function only by not detaining us. When the incarnate Mediator finishes His last judgement and subjects Himself to the Father, He is actually transferring the kingdom in some way "from His humanity to His glorious divinity". The mediating and accommodating function of Christ's humanity will cease, because God in His majesty will rule directly and we are elevated to "see God plainly". It is worth noting that all the basic themes regarding intermediaries such as their delegated authority, accommodating function, side effect as veils, as well as cessation of office, are unreservedly applicable to the humanity of Christ. The same set of elements can be found in a similar but more compact passage, which was added to the definitive edition of *Institutes* in 1559:

For what purpose were power and lordship given to Christ, unless that by his hand the Father might govern us [*Quorsum enim data ei potestas est ac imperium, nisi ut per eius manum pater nos gubernet*]? In this sense, also Christ is said to be seated at the right hand of the Father. Yet this is but for a time, until we enjoy the direct vision of the Godhead [*Hoc vero temporale est, donec praesenti divinitatis aspectu fruamur*]. ... Until he comes forth as judge of the world Christ will therefore reign, joining us to the Father as the measure of our weakness permits [*Regnabit ergo Christus donec prodierit mundi iudex, quatenus pro infirmitatis nostrae modulo patri nos coniungit*]. But when as partakers in heavenly glory we shall see God as he is, Christ, having then discharged the office of the Mediator, will cease to be the ambassador of his Father, and will be satisfied with that glory which he enjoyed before the creation of the world [*Ubi autem consortes coelestis gloriae Deum videbimus qualis est, tunc perfunctus mediatoris officio, desinet patris legatus esse, et ea gloria contentus erit, qua potiebatur ante mundum conditum*]. ... That is, to him was lordship committed by the Father, until such time as we should see

his divine majesty face to face. Then he returns the lordship to his Father so that – far from diminishing his own majesty – it may shine all the more brightly. Then, also, God shall cease to be the Head of Christ, for Christ’s own deity will shine of itself, although as yet it is covered by a veil [*nempe cui temporale imperium a patre mandatum est, donec facie ad faciem conspicua sit divina eius maiestas; cui adeo nihil decedet, imperium patri reddendo, ut longe clarior emineat. Nam et tunc desinet caput Christi esse Deus, quia Christi ipsius deitas ex se ipsa fulgebit, quum adhuc velo quodam sit obtectum*].⁶⁵

Here Calvin did not mention the humanity of Christ as explicitly as in the previous passage. Rather, the focus is on the office of the incarnate Mediator. His office is now to be the ambassador of the Father, who governs us on behalf of the Father and joins us to the Father according to our weakness. But the office is described as *temporale* and will cease when we become the partakers of the heavenly glory and have a direct vision of the divine majesty. Again, a careful statement is added to remind us of that no diminishing of Christ’s majesty is implied in this cessation of His mediatorial office. Instead, He will then be contented with “that glory which he enjoyed before the creation of the world”. The return of temporary lordship in His mediatorial office is paradoxically the ultimate manifestation of His eternal, divine lordship. According to Calvin’s doctrine of order, the

⁶⁵ *Inst.* (1559) II, 14, 3 (CO 2:355). With reference to this passage, Muller writes, “The Judgment at once concludes the official subordination of the Mediator to the work of salvation and manifests as delegated the temporal power given him toward that work, without either of these things taking away from the eternity of Christ’s kingdom. Perhaps too much can be made of the implications of specific terms, but Calvin’s reference to the conclusion of Christ’s earthly mediation, *tunc perfunctus Mediatoris officio*, speaks literally not of the *termination* of the office (*munus*) but of the *perfecting* of the mediatorial work (*officium*).” Muller 45. We can fully agree with Muller that Calvin does not in the least intend to undermine the eternity of Christ’s kingly office. And to some extent, we can also agree that Calvin is not suggesting an ontological change to the incarnate person after the judgement. But the whole point of the issue is the question as to which person is going to rule after the judgement, which is raised by the very fact that Calvin himself sharply differentiates the incarnate person from the pre-existent divine person in his argument. To render the participle *perfunctus* as “termination” or “perfecting” does not make any substantial difference, insofar as the main sentence *desinet ... ante mundum conditum*, as well as the later reinforcement that *Christi ipsius deitas ex se ipsa fulgebit*, strongly points in the direction that it is the divine person *ante mundum conditum* who “resumes” his ruling from the temporal appointment of the incarnate person.

Father, to whom the Mediator is now raising us and in the eschaton will return the kingdom, actually stands out as the representative of the whole Godhead and of the uncreated majesty, with which the eternal Son equally shares. In the light of this teaching, we can see why Calvin was able to describe the return of the kingdom to the Father as Christ's transferring it "in some way from His humanity to His glorious divinity". Alternatively, it can be said that Christ will transfer the kingdom from Calvin's second use of *persona* (i.e. the *inferior gradus* of the Mediator) back to the first use of *persona* (i.e. the consubstantial, co-majestic person of the Trinity). Here we encounter an intriguing inverse of the *extra Calvinisticum*. In the context of the eucharistic teaching, the *extra Calvinisticum* in terms of the second use of *persona* can be invoked to explain how Christ the Mediator is present in the midst of believers: the Mediator, who in His flesh is physically contained in heaven and therefore absent on earth, still is present everywhere and rules believers in His whole person. However, the reverse will be observed in the eschaton: the Mediator in His whole person will cease to rule, while He in His flesh physically comes down to our midst. Care should be taken not to misinterpret Calvin's teaching as that the Son will then cease to be the Head of believers and that men in their glorified condition are able to cleave to God by their own strength. This cannot be true even to the holy angels, let alone human being.⁶⁶ And Calvin made it quite clear that man even in his innocent condition is still too lowly to reach God without a Mediator.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the ontological foundation of the union between God and His creatures does not lie in the hypostatic union between the divine and creaturely natures.

⁶⁶ Comm. on Col. 1:20 (CO 52:88-9) CCNT 313.

⁶⁷ *Inst.* (1559) II, 12, 1 (CO 2:340).

In fact, had sins not intervened in between, the eternal Son could well have exercised His reign and mediation in the virtue of the Spirit, without assuming the human flesh:

Of course I admit that in the original order of creation and the unfallen state of nature Christ was set over angels and men as their Head. ... But since all Scripture proclaims that to become our Redeemer he was clothed with flesh, it is too presumptuous to imagine another reason or another end.⁶⁸

Osiander shows the same ignorance in saying that if Christ had not been man, men would have been without him as their king. As if the Kingdom of God could not stand had the eternal Son of God – though not endued with human flesh – gathered together angels and men into the fellowship of his heavenly glory and life, and himself held the primacy over all! ... As the angels enjoyed his Headship, why could Christ not rule over men also by his divine power, quicken and nourish them like his own body by the secret power of his Spirit until, gathered up into heaven, they might enjoy the same life as the angels!⁶⁹

I admit that Adam bore God's image, in so far as he was joined to God (which is the true and highest perfection of dignity). ... All men unanimously admit that Christ was even then the image of God. Hence, whatever excellence was engraved upon Adam, derived from the fact that he approached the glory of his Creator through the only-begotten Son. ... But I add: the Son himself was the common Head over angels and men. Thus the dignity that had been conferred upon man belonged also to the angels. ... For they [the angels] could not continually enjoy the direct vision of God unless they were like him [Christ]. And Paul similarly teaches that "men are renewed ... after the image of God" only if they consort with the angels so as to cleave together under one head. To sum up: if we believe in Christ, we shall take on the form of angels when we are received into heaven, and this will be our final happiness. But if Osiander is allowed to infer that the first pattern of God's image was in the

⁶⁸ *Inst.* (1559) II, 12, 4 (*CO* 2:342). Several things are to be noted from this and the following cited passages: 1. Calvin holds that both angels and men in their innocent condition need the eternal Son (not the incarnate person) as the common Head and Mediator; 2. In order that the angels fully cleave to God and enjoy the direct vision of God, it is not necessary for the eternal Son to undergo a corresponding hypostatic union between the divine and the angelic natures; 3. Christ's mediatorship and kingship over men did not necessarily depend on incarnation, had not sin intervened in between; 4. The full union with and direct vision of God, which the angels now enjoy, will be extended to men in the eschaton. All these indicate that in the eschaton the original design is restored and perfected, so that the eternal Son in the virtue of the eternal Spirit will become the bond between God and believers.

⁶⁹ *Inst.* (1559) II, 12, 7 (*CO* 2:346).

man Christ, with the same justification anyone can contend that Christ had to partake of the angelic nature because the image of God belongs to them also.⁷⁰

In the eschaton, when death and sins are finally and completely overthrown, the mediating function of Christ's glorious humanity within His kingship will come to an end. The secret working of the Holy Spirit, which is needed for the incarnate person to fulfil His otherwise impossible office, will also cease.⁷¹ Very likely, the Holy Spirit will not cease to be the bond between Christ and us, just as Christ will not abdicate from His

⁷⁰ *Inst.* (1559) II, 12, 6 (CO 2:345). Also, Comm. on 1 Cor. 13:12 (CO 49:514) "I say that the ministry of the word is like a mirror. For the angels do not need preaching, or other inferior aids, or sacraments. They have the advantage of another way of seeing God, for God does not show them His face merely in a mirror, but He presents Himself openly before them. But we, who have not yet scaled such heights, look upon the likeness of God in the Word, in the sacraments, and, in short, in the whole ministry of the Church."

⁷¹ In commenting on the function of the incarnate person of Christ in the eschaton, Muller writes "Christ continues to be the *vinculum coniunctionis* between God and man and the totality of his divine-human person continues, in a sense, to be, as person, *medius gradus* even if his human nature, considered in itself, is no longer *media*. ... In the context of a doctrine of mediation according to the human nature only (in which case the office would be an infrapersonal structure) the human nature might well recede into the ranks of redeemed humanity once its task of reconciling God and man was accomplished, but in the context of Calvin's doctrine – Christ as Mediator according to both natures – both the work of mediation and the union of finite and temporal with infinite and eternal rest upon and are defined by the God-manhood of the Mediator. The functionality of Calvin's Christology neither makes incarnation purely a reaction to sin nor implies the cessation of a Christological function in the eschaton." Muller 48-9. Muller here tries to argue that the ontological constitution of the divine-human person is the very ontic foundation of the union between God and believers. Although the noetic barrier is overcome after the resurrection, this ontic foundation is no less needed after the resurrection than before. Therefore, the divine-human person has to continue his mediating and uniting function and Christ's humanity cannot be dissolved (see also Muller 40). For Muller, the Mediator can only be the divine-human person, so "Calvin implies no actual transfer of power, but only an alteration of its mode of administration", Muller 44. But this interpretation raises several difficulties. First, how can a "Mediator according to *both* natures" continue his mediating function, with his human nature being no longer *media*? Does it not imply that the Mediator is working according to the divine nature alone? How to prove the assumed ontological necessity in Calvin's thought, given that the divine person without incarnation is always the bond between God and the angels and can also likewise be that between God and believers (*Inst.* II, 12, 6; 7)? Secondly, how can this interpretation do justice to Calvin's clear statement that the incarnate Mediator *desinet patris legatus esse*? Thirdly, Muller seems to forget his own analysis that "The structure of Calvin's Christology, therefore, does not follow the pattern of a Christology 'from above' by denominating the 'person' as the divine one who assumes a human nature but rather a pattern similar to a so-called Christology 'from below' by identifying the person of the Mediator within the economy of revelation as both man and God", Muller 35 and that "Calvin's discussion of the *Mediatoris persona* belongs to the time between the fall and the Judgment." Muller 45. In fact, it is exactly this reluctance to identify the *Mediatoris persona* with the assuming subject which makes it necessary to ask which person is going to rule after the judgement. Respecting Calvin's own theological arrangement, we cannot but consider the ontological and the functional dimensions separately. While accepting the former as unchanged, we have to admit that the latter comes to an end, that is, the incarnate person lays down his mediatorial office as his humanity ceases to be *media*.

kingdom. But just as the Son will be satisfied with the glory which He enjoyed with the Father before the creation of the world, the Spirit will accordingly be discharged from His office as the Spirit of the incarnate Mediator and fully manifest His glory as the eternal Spirit of the Father and the Son.

There still remains the question as to whether the humanity of Christ will finally be dissolved. There is no evidence showing that Calvin had the abandonment of Christ's humanity in mind. Nor did he mean to diminish the honour of Christ's humanity by regarding it as an instrument for a time. In fact, for Calvin, to be God's instrument of conferring His blessings is the highest possible honour in the world. When we seriously consider how Calvin understood the destiny of other creaturely authorities, it will not be too hasty to infer that he would pay the highest regard to Christ's humanity and affirm its perpetuity.⁷² However, our enquiry is limited by the fact that Calvin did not expound the issue further. Calvin was customarily quite restrained from speculating theological issues that in his opinion are not very useful to our piety. What seems important to Calvin in this respect is not whether Christ's humanity will be diminished, but how surely our humanity will be elevated in the end. In the eschaton, the Holy Spirit will complete this

⁷² While discussing Calvin's understanding of the cessation of Christ's mediatorship, Witte comments, "Calvin scheint hingegen der Ansicht zu sein, daß der Sohn Gottes nach dem Tag des letzten Gerichts seine menschliche Natur ablegen werde; denn 'dann wird Christus auch aufhören das Haupt zu sein, da die Gottheit Christi aus sich selber erstrahlen wird, während sie jetzt noch in einen Schleier gehüllt ist'." J. L. Witte, "Die Christologie Calvins," in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 3, A. Grillmeier & H. Bacht (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1954) 487-529, at 503-4. It is not entirely clear to us how Witte can substantiate the suggested view of the final abandonment of Christ's humanity by quoting the above text from *Inst.* II, 14, 3. It is even more puzzling, as he continues, "Bei diesem verhüllenden Schleier handelt es sich, wie der Zusammenhang lehrt, nicht um die *exinanitio*, die Kenosis Christi, sondern um den uns verborgenen erhöhten Zustand Christi." *ibid.* If veiling itself does not diminish the divine majesty in the least, there is no compelling need in Calvin's thought to assert an abandonment of the human nature in order that this majesty is fully unveiled in the eschaton.

elevation without employing any intermediary, including Christ's humanity. God's glory and His sovereign ruling will be immediately recognised all in all, notwithstanding the fact that it is no less through the eternal Son and in the open (no more "secret" in the eschaton) virtue of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Calvin's pneumatology has captured the imagination of quite a number of scholars. They have believed that Calvin's contribution in this aspect should not be dismissed as simply one strand out of the Reformed tradition, but is indeed still serving the Christian Church in a more ecumenical manner. Warfield's following comment may be reckoned as the ultimate expression of this optimism:

It is probable however that Calvin's greatest contribution to theological science lies in the rich development which he gives – and which he was the first to give – to the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit. No doubt, from the origin of Christianity, everyone who has been even slightly imbued with the Christian spirit has believed in the Holy Spirit as the author and giver of life ... But in the same sense in which we may say that the doctrine of sin and grace dates from Augustine, the doctrine of satisfaction from Anselm, the doctrine of justification by faith from Luther, - we must say that the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is a gift from Calvin to the Church. It was he who first related the whole experience of salvation specifically to the working of the Holy Spirit, worked it out into its details, and contemplated its several steps and stages in orderly progress as the product of the Holy Spirit's specific work in applying salvation to the soul. Thus he gave systematic and adequate expression to the whole doctrine of the Holy Spirit and made it the assured possession of the Church of God.¹

It is not our intention here to verify or falsify Warfield's suggestion that Calvin is the first person who has achieved such an epoch-making development in the history of Christian thought that he is justly called *the* theologian of the Holy Spirit. A serious assessment of this may call for a more extensive study on the origins, deflections from those origins, and the subsequent influences, of Calvin's pneumatology, which evidently

¹ B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1956) 485.

exceeds our scope. Rather, we have been concerned primarily with the development and function of one important pneumatological motif in his thought, namely, the Holy Spirit as bond, especially in connection with the so-called *extra Calvinisticum*. This pneumatological motif is the crowning conception in Book Three of the definitive edition of the *Institutes*, which sums up the work of the Holy Spirit in applying salvation to believers. Any legitimate interpretation of Calvin's pneumatology should not therefore overlook his intention behind this important theme. The essential thesis of the present study is that the development and employment of this pneumatological theme was triggered and deepened by a christological decision, namely the *extra Calvinisticum*, and its corresponding understanding of communion with Christ. This decision first appeared clearly in his solution to the thorny problem of the presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper. Out of his conviction that our salvation rests on the fact that Christ our Mediator should be truly God and truly man at the same time, Calvin found it necessary to safeguard the completeness and distinctiveness of Christ's two natures. This insistence called for a corresponding denial of any direct interchange of properties at the level of essence (i.e. realistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum*). On the side of divinity, it is expressed as the so-called *extra Calvinisticum*, in which the divinity is said to have descended or to have been clothed in the flesh in such a manner that it did not cease to fill the heaven and rule also outside the flesh as before. This paradoxical assertion leads to two interrelated impacts on Calvin's thought.

First, Calvin tended to shift the tension found in the conventional natures-christology to an offices-christology. In order to maintain the completeness of both natures, Calvin

differentiated two uses of the term *persona*. When it is used to designate the divine person of the Trinity, it works as the synonym of other ontological terms such as *hypostasis* or *subsistentia*. In this sense, emphasis will be laid on the full equality of the pre-existent person of the Son with that of the Father, pointing us to the one, undiminished majesty of the eternal God. On the other hand, when the term is used to designate the incarnate person of the Mediator, it works more or less as a functional term, pointing us to the office and commission of the Mediator. This person or office was indeed constituted and fulfilled out of the two underlying natures, but a line of demarcation should be drawn between the functional level of the whole person and the essential level of the two natures, so that what belongs to the former cannot be read back directly to the latter. This is how Calvin handled the “hypostatic union” of the two natures without invoking any realistic notion of *communicatio idiomatum*. When this demarcation was applied to the problem of Christ’s presence in the Supper, Calvin thought he managed to solve it by holding simultaneously that Christ in his humanity is contained in heaven until the day of last judgement and that Christ in his whole person of Mediator is also present always and everywhere with believers, and reveals Himself in a special way in the Supper. This is actually a restatement of the *extra Calvinisticum* in terms of the second sense of *persona*. Furthermore, this contrast between the first and second senses of *persona* fits well with his doctrine of accommodation, which provides a very promising “outlet” for the ontological tension between the two natures. The puzzle raised by the peculiar words and works of the incarnate person was converted to an adoration of God’s mercy in ordaining a means of accommodating our weakness, i.e. the preordained office of the Mediator. In it, the incarnate Mediator undertook the *medius*

gradus between God and us, in contrast with the *superior gradus* of the Father, who stands as the representative of the whole eternal Godhead by the doctrine of order, so that He can lift us up *gradatim* to the one, true, eternal God. The tension between these two uses of *persona* therefore enshrines the dialectic between the veiling and unveiling of the divine majesty, between the present humble condition and the future glorious condition. The descent on earth without leaving heaven then opens up an elevating and uniting movement, which compels believers to seek upwards and forwards for the heavenly glory. This tension will be resolved and the offices will come to an end, when the elevation is completed by the bodily resurrection in the eschaton. By that time, accommodation will no longer be needed and we can see the glory of God face to face.

Secondly, this offices-christology leads to a corresponding offices-pneumatology. In dealing with the problem of Christ's presence in the Supper, Calvin insisted that human body as such, even that of Christ, cannot be life-giving and must retain its definite dimensionality and locality. Any compromise at this point may mean to him that the completeness of both natures is inevitably called into question. Yet, since Calvin held that Christ's body somehow plays a role in the Supper, this called for an account on how the spatial barrier arising from Christ's ascension can be overcome. This is actually a special instance of a larger problem: how to understand the influence of the divinity upon the humanity, provided there is no direct interchange of properties at the level of essence? Again, Calvin's solution is to transpose a problem of natures to that of offices, and here pneumatologically. He suggested "the Holy Spirit as bond" between Christ and us, settling the divine influence in the office of the Holy Spirit. At first glance, this notion of

“the Holy Spirit as bond” sounds very Augustinian. But a closer inspection will find that Calvin’s intent is indeed quite different from that of Augustine. Calvin did not share Augustine’s concern in inquiring about its ontological ground in the immanent Trinity, but laid emphasis on its function in relation to the office of the Mediator. This can be seen clearly in his attitude towards the *Filioque* problem, where Calvin was not concerned about the ontological detail of the so-called double procession of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity, but simply took it as a confirmation of the unveiling of the veiled glory of the Mediator. The divine influence of the Holy Spirit as bond is twofold: first, in establishing the redeeming works of the incarnate person; then, in translating the effect of Christ’s acquired benefits to us. For the redeeming works of the Mediator, it is in the work of the Holy Spirit that the humanity is elevated and incorporated into the office of the Mediator. For imparting the salvific benefits of these redeeming works, it is also in the work of the same Spirit that we are elevated and united to the Mediator. The office and effect of the Mediator then ceases to be something indifferent to us, but becomes really for us, so much so that His righteousness and life becomes our undeserved possession, just as our iniquity and death becomes His undeserved burden. In this sense, we are said to grow into one body with Him, to have communion with Him or to be made one with Him.

As for the notion “communion with Christ”, Calvin first employed it as the common ground for both justification and regeneration in the 1539 *Institutes*, and its function had a strong affinity with the office of the Holy Spirit as the agent of assurance. However, the clearest expression of its correlation with “the Holy Spirit as bond” did not appear

until the 1559 edition, when Calvin noticed the challenge of Osiander's doctrine of essential righteousness. Wrestling with this eccentric understanding of justification, he saw that such teaching of indwelling or communion of Christ's divine essence sacrifices the role of His humanity in the office of the Mediator and will finally undermine the only accommodated and assured way of salvation ordained by God according to our feeble nature. To rectify its error, one should not only affirm the crucial place of Christ's humanity in acquiring righteousness, but should also shift our understanding of communion with Christ from the level of essence to that of the person of the Mediator. This reinforced the same theological instinct as found in the *extra Calvinisticum*. The christological decision regarding the two natures should be consistently applied to our communion with Christ: distinction should be maintained at the level of essence, while unity is attained at the level of office. Our communion with Christ therefore cannot mean that our humanity comes to a direct mutual indwelling with either Christ's divine or human essence. Rather, it is co-ordinated with and subordinated to the offices of the Mediator and His Spirit. In Calvin's thought, our union with Christ is actually a mystical movement of elevation, which was opened up by the redeeming work of the incarnate Mediator and is now actualised in our life. This movement is called mystical, because it is accomplished by the secret and miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. He is the illuminator and seal of our faith, who elevates our mind to understand and our heart to trust the work of Christ for us. He is the pledge of our adoption, who attests to us God's mercy before all ages, as made known in the reconciliation of Christ. He is the Spirit of sanctification, who translates the mortifying and quickening efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection into our soul, so that we are conformed more and more every day to the

likeness of Christ. He is the Spirit of glory, who raises our eyes to contemplate our hidden glory in the ascended Christ, so that we are able to bear the cross patiently in the present life. He is the Spirit of perseverance, who fortifies us with the first taste of the eschatological freedom, which proved to be invincible against the devil and all the machinations of hell in Christ's temptation and passion. And He is also the Spirit of bodily resurrection, who will elevate our body from corruptible to incorruptible condition and reunite it with our soul, when the Mediator discharges His last assignment of His office (i.e. judgement of the living and the dead). In short, Calvin carefully correlated the offices of the Spirit with those of the Mediator, so that they embrace every aspect of our spiritual life. It is fair to say that "the Holy Spirit as bond" is demanded and controlled by the *extra Calvinisticum*.

In the above recapitulation of the present study, some nuances of Calvin's thought have already been mentioned in passing. We are now going to dwell on their implications to the overall cast of his theology.

I. Some reflections on Calvin's theology

i. *Humilitas non capax maiestatis*

We have mentioned that Calvin tends to transpose the tension arising from the problem of two natures to the realm of *persona*. But this does not mean that the category "nature" then degenerates to a relic in Calvin's thought. Rather, in some transformed

manner, it still plays a very important role. In our study, we see that the *extra Calvinisticum* and the corresponding “Holy Spirit as bond” were firmly held by Calvin to defend Christ’s full divine and human natures. This insistence is of vital significance for his soteriology, in that only with true divinity can the Mediator have the required power, majesty and authority in conquering sin, death and all the devilish machinations, but only by assuming the true humanity can this God in His unapproachable majesty get near to us and become our goodness. The whole course of reconciliation is underscored by this mysterious dialectic between God’s majesty and His mercy. Our greatest blessing is ultimately grounded in our relation with the *vera divinitas extra carnem*, and yet it is mediated to us for a while through the *vera caro*. The highest credit Calvin can ascribe to Christ’s humanity is its instrumentality in fulfilling God’s merciful accommodation. Calvin’s *Deus manifestatus in carne* is one who always points us beyond His *velum humilitatis* to contemplate His *maiestas extra carnem*. And the secret work of the Holy Spirit is invoked to solve the paradox between humbleness and majesty. Certainly we cannot know God from anywhere else than the man Jesus. As the ultimate expression of the divine mercy, the accommodating function of Christ’s humanity is absolutely necessary for our salvation. Without the pledge of its resurrection and glorious ascension, our feeble heart cannot be fully assured and our hope of immortality will be faint. But in order to fulfil its commission, the means of accommodation must not detain us, but serves to help us climb higher and recognise Christ as the sovereign Lord in exercising the full power of the Holy Spirit, the one true God *etiam extra carnem*. This vision of divine majesty must become greater, while the need of accommodation must come to cease. In this sense, divine majesty takes priority over divine mercy. True

humanity is the *terminus a quo*, whereas true divinity is the *terminus ad quem*. It would be quite untenable to conclude that Calvin derived the *extra Calvinisticum* from the spatial principle of “*finitum non capax infiniti*”. However, if finitude, being an essential attribute of true humanity as Calvin believes, is taken as an indicator of Christ’s *humilitas* in flesh and infinity His undiminished *maiestas* in divinity, then this motto is not entirely futile in reminding us of the position of his soteriology: *humilitas non capax maiestatis*. After all, humbleness is not able to exhaust majesty. One day, majesty will completely transcend humbleness. Our whole Christian life is to be orientated towards this happening, and repeatedly reminded of it by the exhortation in the Lord’s Supper: *sursum corda*.

ii. Person of the Mediator

The dialectic between divine majesty and divine mercy brings us to the contribution as well as problem of Calvin’s peculiar understanding of *persona* in his thought. While the eternal God’s undiminished majesty and our feeble humanity stand as two ends of a journey, the Word become flesh intervenes in between and elevates the weaker party in the power of His Spirit. But this “becoming” does not mean that the eternal person of the Word turned to be some sort of *tertium quid*, nor that it no longer remained also outside the flesh as He had been before the foundation of the world (i.e. the first sense of *persona*), but that an incarnate person of the Mediator (i.e. the second sense of *persona*) was constituted out of the two natures in the fullness of time. These two senses of *persona* overlapped throughout the whole course of redemption. The first sense of

persona preserves the undiminished majesty of the eternal God, which the Word outside the flesh always shares with the Father, whereas the second sense of *persona* accounts for the scriptural witness that the Mediator is discharging an office that is not fitting for a mere human being, and yet is somehow inferior to the Father and thus nearer to us. The notion “the Holy Spirit as bond” is basically a pneumatological counterpart of the second sense of *persona* in Calvin’s christology. The office of the Spirit is invoked to coordinate and unite the two natures in constituting the one person of the Mediator. To safeguard the completeness and distinction of the two underlying natures, Calvin drew a line of demarcation between the natures and the second sense of *persona*, so that the properties of the constituting natures are allowed to be jointly ascribed to the resultant person, whereas the properties of the incarnate person cannot be ascribed separately to either the divinity or the humanity. This raises a question as to the ontological relationship between this resultant person and the pre-existent person, for the underlying divine nature of the incarnate person is no other than that of the pre-existent person. Theologians both before and after Chalcedon had been plunged into a heated debate to clarify the ontological foundation of the incarnation, as well as the identity between the pre-existent person and the incarnate person. But Calvin did not follow their footsteps. For him, our knowledge of God should be concerned not so much with what God is in Himself, as with what His will and work is towards us. This sentiment is also observed in his discussion of Christ’s hypostatic union. As he shied away from inquiring into the ontological detail of the Son’s eternal generation in his trinitarian teaching, so did he in the ontological foundation of the incarnation. Such discussion seemed to him to be too speculative and not very edifying to simple piety. Leaving this thorny question

unaddressed, he shifted his main concern to what the Mediator actually performed for us in His office by appropriating the two underlying natures and how the effect of this office is finally imparted to our life. This enables Calvin to be especially keen on correlating Christ's every word and work in His earthly ministry with our salvation. This also raises his sensitivity to the office and work of the Spirit in every stage of our salvation, which is exactly what Warfield highly regards as his epoch-making contribution in pneumatology. His position admonishes the Church that under no circumstances can Christian theology afford to lose sight of Christ's office for us and our personal involvement in it. Any subsequent inquiry is meant to illuminate rather than obscure this knowledge, for the foundation of our salvation is laid once and for all on the office of Christ and nowhere else. Having made allowance for his reservation towards "idle speculations", we cannot but admit that Calvin here indeed left a precarious loose end in his use of *persona*. When we turn to his own formulation of the *extra Calvinisticum*, Calvin could replace the essential term "divinity" with terms such as "Word" or "Son of God", which clearly stand for the first sense of *persona*. He should be aware that the line of demarcation between the second sense of *persona* and the constituent natures inevitably induces a corresponding distinction between the two senses of *persona*. In fact, he was quite content to make use of this distinction to defend the integrity of the underlying natures. But if it is unacceptable for Christian faith to stretch the distinction between the existence of the incarnate Mediator and that of the two underlying natures to such an extent that they become two realms of reality absolutely sealed off from each other, then Calvin has to admit that there is a very sensible reason to articulate more expressly the unity of these two senses of *persona*. This demand does not derive from some undisciplined curiosity

of speculation, but from a confession of pious simplicity that the incarnate person towards us is one and the same pre-existent second person of the Trinity, or to put it still more simply, that the man Jesus is the Lord God Almighty, the very conviction Calvin himself insisted so fervently in his 1537 *Confessio de Trinitate*. Fortunately enough, Calvin's own teaching is not entirely consistent at this point. He sometimes skipped the use of *persona* and directly asserted the identity between the Redeemer and the eternal Son, without elaborating how this identity can be reconciled with his more explicit affirmation of their distinction. This inconsistency is also observed in his doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum*. This inconsistency is happy enough to rescue his thought from falling short of the core message of the Gospel, but is unhappy enough to leave his Polish contemporaries open to anti-trinitarian teaching.

iii. Distinction between essence and quality

In rejecting a direct *communicatio idiomatum* at the level of essence, Calvin replaced it with the work of the Holy Spirit in imparting the divine influence to Christ's human nature. This intimates to us a metaphysical presupposition underneath his thought. Regarding the term "nature" in the *Institutes*, McNeill points out that there are two very different meanings. One refers to the created perfection of God, in which there is no evil, whereas the other refers to the fallen state of human being and angels. The first sense is employed to repudiate the error of Manichaeism, while the second that of Pelagianism. This double use of "nature" had first appeared in the 1539 edition and had since been retained in all the subsequent editions. Similar articulation can also be found in Calvin's

polemic treatise against Pighius in 1543. In analysing the treatise, Lane discerns that Calvin heavily depended on the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accident to refute the charge of Manichaeism raised by Pighius. Here, substance corresponds to McNeill's first use of "nature", which is good and cannot be eradicated even after the fall, while accident or accidental quality corresponds to the second use of "nature", standing for the corrupt, evil condition coming to the human nature after the fall. This composition of human nature can equally be expressed by another Aristotelian distinction between matter and form. The human will is described as a matter which receives form, where a bad form results from the corruption of original sin and a good form from the operation of grace, i.e. the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Lane is of the opinion that the use of the Aristotelian distinction in this important treatise cannot be regarded as opportunistic, but is actually fundamental to Calvin's argument. Our present study confirms these earlier observations, in that a similar distinction between essence and quality in the human nature is also found to be fundamental to his notion of "the Holy Spirit as bond". In employing different pairs of philosophical distinction, Calvin intended to illustrate the same reality that there are two "layers" in the human nature. One is a natural endowment or substantial property that is granted through creation and is unchangeable. It is unchangeable, not because it has the sustaining power by itself, but because the ordained order of creation stands firm even after the fall. For instance, immortality is the created property of the human soul. Sin brings forth its separation from its body in death, but cannot turn it from immortal to mortal. However, it is so because the Creator-Spirit enforces God's creation order by sustaining its perpetual existence. If He ceased to do so, the soul would immediately vanish. From the creation

point of view, it should be considered positively as a gift of God. But, it is quite neutral in the matter of salvation, for it can turn out to be the prerequisite of eternal blessing for the faithful or of eternal punishment for the wicked. Our salvation hinges on what actually happens to the other “layer”. It is a spiritual condition or quality that is subject to change. The same framework applies to the Lord’s Supper. In it, the created properties of Christ’s humanity such as definite location and dimension cannot and should not be changed. His humanity does not become our food and drink by breaching the created order of its essence. Any teaching of physical manducation is a gross fancy to be rejected. What really matters is that the Holy Spirit confers a new spiritual quality on it, so that it becomes life-giving to believers. On the other hand, in our communion with Christ, “the Holy Spirit as bond” also prevents our essence from commingling with the divine (or human) essence of Christ. What actually happens to us is that the Spirit translates the spiritual quality of Christ to the soul in our present life, and to the body later in the eschaton. In other words, the office of the Redeemer-Spirit, together with the so-called wonderful communion between Christ and us, does not take place in the realm of essence, but in that of quality. In the final analysis, our communion with Christ, and ultimately our union with God, is in fact an elevation to and a concord with Him in spiritual quality. Therefore, it is quite unwarranted to say that, for Calvin, our communion with Christ by the bond of the Spirit means a mutual exchange of humanity between Christ and us,² or even that it is equivalent to an inclusion in the *perichoresis* of

² T. Hart, “Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in Our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989) 67-84.

the divine life,³ unless the terms “humanity” and “*perichoresis*” are properly reinterpreted according to Calvin’s own metaphysical presupposition. This also brings us to the question: in what sense is Calvin’s thought trinitarian, especially in light of his pneumatology and the *extra Calvinisticum*?

iv. The Spirit’s work as the form of God’s eternal decree

The renaissance of trinitarian theology in the last few decades has led to a renewed interest in the Reformers’ doctrine of Trinity. Although it is commonly agreed that the legacy of the Reformers lies in their reconstruction of the doctrine of grace, efforts are made to unravel the decisive role of the Trinity in their understanding of grace. “Trinitarian” is a very pregnant term. Its manifold connotations in contemporary discussions need not detain us now. Our attention is drawn to a strand of interpretation of the Reformers’ pneumatology, which can be well exemplified by Schwöbel’s following comment:

It is their [Reformers including Calvin] reshaping of the doctrine of grace in terms of the free activity of God the Spirit which leads to a new emphasis on God’s trinitarian action. The reinterpretation of Spirit discourse makes it necessary that the activity of God the Spirit is seen as the perfection and actualisation of the work of the Father and the Son. ... The work of the Spirit is therefore the form of God’s trinitarian action. ... The point of this trinitarian account of divine action is that it is described as a threefold divine self-giving. ... The upshot of this has been concisely summarised by Eilert Herms: the economic Trinity is the *self*-manifestation of the immanent Trinity.⁴

³ P. W. Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); also “Reformed Ecclesiology: Trinitarian Grace According to Calvin,” *Studies in Reformed Theology and History* 2, 1 (1994).

⁴ C. Schwöbel, “The Triune God of Grace: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Theology of the Reformers,” in *The Christian Understanding of God Today* (ed.) J. M. Byrne (Dublin: Columba Press, 1993) 49-64, at 54-55. Here Herms’ motto is originally an appraisal of Luther’s thought. But if we understand Schwöbel

In sum, according to this interpretation, the actualisation work of the Spirit in the economy can be understood as an act in which believers are enlightened and thus incorporated into the inner life of the immanent Trinity. Is this a fair understanding of Calvin's pneumatology? The answer very much depends on what exactly the term "self" is referring to. In the present study, we have shown that this actualisation work of the Spirit is executed through His being the bond between Christ and believers. And this pneumatological office is in turn demanded by the office of the incarnate Mediator, which is inferior to the eternal God, i.e. the immanent Trinity, with respect to the *extra Calvinisticum*. The whole work of the Mediator is subordinated to God's eternal ordinance. As the accommodated way of revelation, the Mediator assures the elect that the good pleasure of God that He proclaims to them is really grounded in the eternal will of the immanent Trinity towards them. But this is also the upper bound of His revelation. Calvin advises that we should better content ourselves within this limit, lest any attempt to glimpse the life of the immanent Trinity, or simply to inquire further into His inscrutable decree, will throw oneself miserably into an abyss. A parallel delimitation can also be found in the office of the Spirit. Among the manifold works of this bond, "faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit", which occupies the third order in our salvation as its instrumental cause, while the Father's mercy takes the first as the efficient cause and the Son's obedience the second as the material cause. If obedience is the very representative of the earthly ministry of the Son, then illumination unto faith is that of the Spirit in the economy. But just as the Son's obedient ministry on earth is a faithful

correctly based on his overall argument as well as the references in endnotes, he should have no problem in extending this motto to Calvin's pneumatology.

execution of the Father's merciful plan before the foundation of the world (merciful at least for the elect), so the Spirit's actualisation work is orientated in the same direction. For Calvin, Christian faith is a duplicate copy imprinted in the heart of the elect, where its original is God's knowledge of their adoption, which God keeps to Himself in His eternal counsel. The attestation and consolation of the Spirit in the economy is ultimately grounded in and delimited to the eternal will of the immanent Trinity.⁵ Therefore, if the trinitarian action in Calvin's thought is to be described as the self-giving or self-manifestation of the immanent Trinity, it has to be recalled at the same time that Calvin cautiously prevents us from speaking of this "self" in its intra-trinitarian life any further than His firm decree of election and the related plan of accommodation for His elect.

⁵ In analysing the relation of Trinity and predestination in Calvin's thought, Martin draws our attention to *Institutes* III, 24, 5, arguing, "Ce qui est important dans ce text, c'est qu'il nous soit dit que nous ne pouvons avoir la certitude de notre élection que dans la relation Père-Fils. Cela signifie que la prédestination n'est pas le fruit d'on ne sait quel caprice de la divinité, mais elle est le prolongement de l'amour du Père et du Fils. En étant élus, nous sommes au bénéfice de l'amour divin. ... La prédestination se fonde dans l'amour qui unit le Père au Fils." A. G. Martin, "La place de la Trinité dans l'Institution chrétienne de Calvin," *La Revue Réformée* 30 (1979) 131-149, at 143. This love within the intra-trinitarian life is extended to man in the work of the Spirit: "L'Esprit exprime cet amour du Père et du Fils, et ce n'est que par l'Esprit que l'homme peut s'approprier cet amour" (ibid. 144). Thinking that the doctrine of predestination is properly controlled by that of Trinity, he then concludes, "La prédestination n'est pas la solitude de l'homme en face de la solitude de Dieu. C'est au contraire la décision de Dieu d'ouvrir son amour de Père pour son Fils par le Saint-Esprit. L'homme n'est pas seul en face de Dieu, il bénéficie de la communion des trois Personnes entre elles" (ibid. 144), and that "sans l'Esprit, la prédestination est un acte arbitraire; avec l'Esprit, elle est l'oeuvre de la grâce de Dieu." (ibid. 148). Bray shares similar sentiment that Calvin subsumes predestination under incorporation into the intra-trinitarian life, when he argues that, "It was only with the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that God began to dwell in the heart of every believer, revealing to him the secret of his own internal relations." G. Bray, "The Primacy of the Persons in God," chap. in *The Doctrine of God* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 197-224, at 202; and that "It is always essential when considering predestination, to realize that Calvin placed it firmly in the context of the saving work of Christ. Election is God's choice of some people to share in his trinitarian life by being adopted as sons (in the image of Christ) through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit." (ibid. 206). Thus he concludes, "The importance of all this for human election becomes apparent when we realize that it is in the person of the Holy Spirit that God comes to us, pointing us to the person of the Son as our Mediator before the judgment seat of (the person of) the Father. As Christians we enjoy a personal relationship with God, which means that we are not prisoners of his immutable will (any more than we are still slaves to the will of our own nature) but co-workers with him in the kingdom of heaven." (ibid. 208) However, both authors do not notice that Calvin, especially in his commentary on John 17, explicitly declines to regard the love of the Father towards Christ as the love within the intra-trinitarian life, but insistently views it from His eternal appointment as the executor of our eternal election. Therefore,

This does not mean that the doctrine of predestination is therefore the central dogma of Calvin's theology, in the sense that he deduces the whole system of his thought from a basic principle of certain deterministic philosophy. But it at least suggests to us that it would be more likely for Calvin to see the work of the Spirit in the economy as the form of God's eternal decree, than that of the "self-giving" of the immanent Trinity according to our contemporary exponents.

II. Suggestion for further study

It is notoriously recognised in Calvin studies that to give a comprehensive account of the sources of Calvin's thought is itself a gigantic, if not impossible, project. This is no less true for his pneumatology. Spijker strongly suggests that Calvin learned a lot from Bucer in this respect. This may be possible, for Calvin scholars have long pointed out that Calvin had had correspondence with Bucer and had read at least his commentaries on Gospels and John, even before their personal acquaintance began in 1537.⁶ However, even if this is true, Bucer's new insight on the work of the Spirit regarding Christ's presence in the eucharist, which took shape from 1526 to 1530 according to Stephens' analysis,⁷ did not find its way straight into the 1536 *Institutes*. The crucial pneumatological motif "Holy Spirit as bond" is simply not present in that edition. Rather, its inchoate form was first discerned in Calvin's discourse in the 1536 Lausanne

technically speaking, "cet amour du Père et du Fils", together with its appropriation in the Spirit, is controlled by the doctrine of predestination, rather than vice versa.

⁶ F. Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (London: William Collins and Son, Ltd., 1963; Baker Books, 1997) 137-144; also, A. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987) 158-168.

⁷ W. P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) 245-257.

Colloquy, when he defended the third article drafted by the Reformed side. This may indicate that the Bucerian influence, if there is any in this respect, might actually take place between August 1535 and October 1536. Some circumstantial data are worthy of note. First, as shown in the present study, Calvin appealed to Rom 8:9 as the major scriptural support for the notion of “Holy Spirit as bond” in the 1539 *Institutes*. Secondly, Calvin’s first duty in Geneva was expounding Paul’s epistles at St. Pierre, and his choice probably included Romans, seeing that his first commentary published in 1540 was that on Romans. Thirdly, Bucer’s commentary on Romans appeared in 1536, and Calvin had referenced it before he began his own work. Calvin’s new pneumatological insight may be the result of a closer reading of Bucer’s writing. A critical comparison of their pneumatologies in their respective commentaries on Romans may help to clarify the extent of dependence between these two Reformers.⁸ In addition to direct influence from Bucer’s writing, it may also be that someone among the Reformed churchmen first drew Calvin’s attention to the Bucerian insight, or even that there was another tradition of invoking the Spirit to deal with the eucharistic problem, which was developed independently of Bucer. If this is true, the ecclesiastical context of Geneva, together with its intricate relation with Bern, during his early career might have left deeper imprint on Calvin’s thought than is documented. A detailed study of this earlier tradition and its interaction with Calvin may deepen our view on the symbiotic relation between the Reformer’s thought and his ecclesio-political situation.

⁸ Kok has recently argued that Bucer did not significantly influence Calvin in his interpretation of Romans; J. E. Kok, “The Influence of Martin Bucer on John Calvin’s Interpretation of Romans: A Comparative Case Study,” (Ph. D. diss., Duke University, 1993). However, this work is not particularly related to Calvin’s pneumatology.

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